

# FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!

Revolutionary Communist Group

Number 120 August/September 1994

(unwaged 30p) 50p



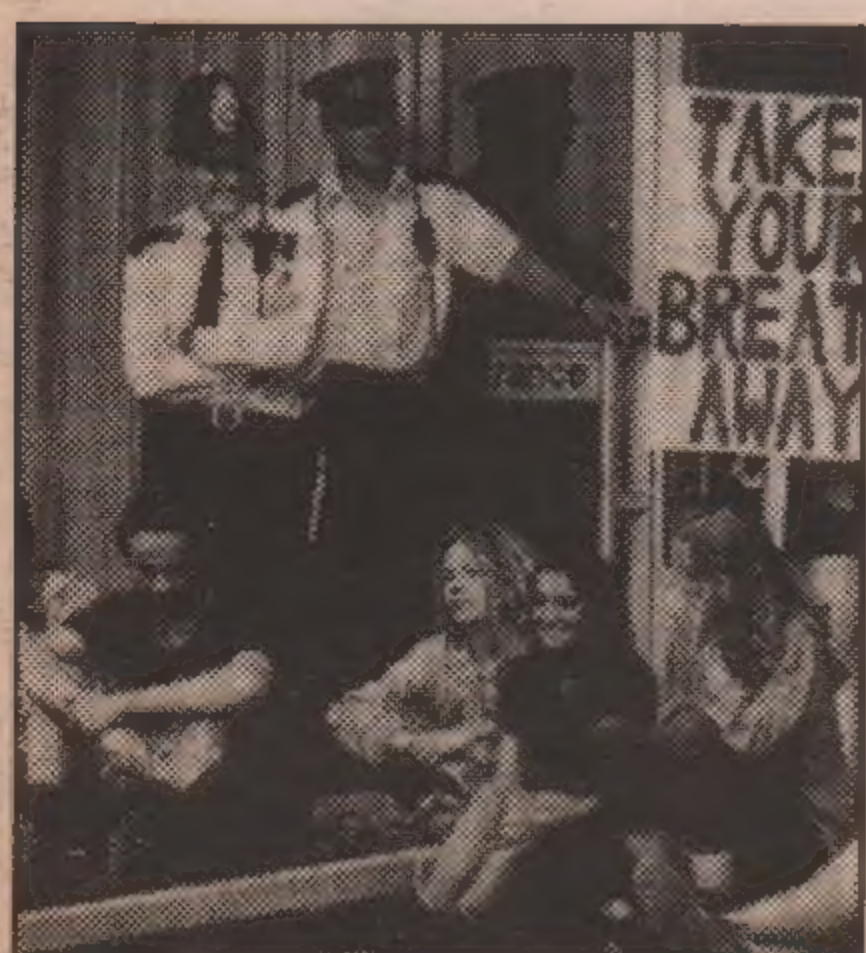
Solidarity  
price  
£1

## The road to ruin

Editorial

**Support the  
signalworkers –  
rail not road**

p2



**Bastards –  
a round-up of the  
corrupt liars who run  
Britain**

Privatisation millionaires  
A corrupt Parliament

p3

**The Communist Manifesto  
A world still to win**

p7

**Information Superhighway  
The Greatest Show  
on Earth**

the culture of control and  
superprofits

p8/9

**World War II  
Churchill and  
the big lie**

p6



**Turkey –  
political and  
economic crisis  
... the imperialist  
connection**

p10

**Korea –  
Kim Il Sung dies  
Imperialism lays  
siege**

p11

**Anti-racist  
fightback  
round-up of  
campaigns**

p16





# A simple question

It ought to be a simple question. 4,600 signalmen on the railways have been trying to negotiate a wage rise for seven years. In the face of a lying, cheating government and its henchmen on the Railtrack board, these signalmen have finally gone on strike, one day a week for seven weeks, now escalating to 48 hours in selected weeks. Over the last ten years their productivity has doubled, costs have dropped by 16% and 1,500 have been made redundant. Meanwhile their wages have plummeted in comparison to other railway workers: the basic wage is £7,600 for the lowest grade, £11,700 for the highest, rising to an average of £16,686 with allowances and overtime. These are poor wages for a highly-skilled and stressful job requiring a 50-hour-minimum week and rotating shifts.

The Railtrack bosses want past productivity increases to be ignored, and in a series of negotiations have offered derisory settlements. 'Hatchet' Horton, Railtrack's chief, works three days a week for £120,000 and earned his name butchering BP's workforce in the 1970s. He was ousted from BP in 1992 with a golden handshake of £1.5 million. He is also stupid; he and his negotiating team have dropped a series of deeply embarrassing clangers; not least of all transparent lies about the involvement of the government in blocking a modest offer which the signalmen's union, RMT, was willing to consider.

Even the majority of rail commuters think it's a simple question. The surge of public anger at the transport chaos, eagerly anticipated by government ministers, has not transpired. An unprecedented 40% of the public think the government is to blame – only a small minority believe the signalmen are to blame. The ailing Major government hoped for a different scenario. Fresh from what passes these days for strong leadership – using Britain's veto in Europe – the government wants a fight with the unions both to rally its disenchanted voters and to smooth the path to rail privatisation. It is getting neither.

For socialists the question is straightforward. The Tories would like to use a defeat of the signalmen and their union to attack unionisation and the right to strike throughout the public sector. The ruling class always expects the working class to pay for its crises – our wages and benefits are worth less while Tory chums who head the privatised industries get fat handouts. For us, the fruits of privatisation are higher prices – privatised railways will mean dearer transport and rich pickings for the likes of Hatchet Horton. Anyone calling themselves socialist will have no hesitation about supporting the striking signalmen.

But the Labour Party cannot give a simple answer to a simple question: Do you support the strike? Not one Labour Party leader has had the nerve to say Yes. Ask them a slightly more complicated question about privatisations, the future of the Welfare State, trade union rights, civil rights, poverty, state benefits, racism, Ireland... and your chances of a straight answer

dwindle to vanishing point. If Labour cannot defend its traditional constituency – male skilled workers – in case they alienate the southern middle classes, there is no prospect of defending us, the rest of the working class. On the contrary, workers who rely on the Labour Party will face betrayal. We need an organisation which will straightforwardly organise in our defence.

Never has the need for a planned, efficient and cheap public transport system, with railways at its heart, been more transparent. Every summer the number of asthma sufferers grows – there are now three million and most of them are children. On 12 July this year pollution levels in London were double the recommended limits. Yet there is no serious monitoring of pollution, let alone an active response. The old, the young, the sick and pregnant women are told to stay at home, while car and lorry drivers are free to raise the levels of poison.

None of this is an oversight. The effects of car and lorry emissions are well known in every European city. The pollution is a direct result not just of incompetence, but of Tory transport policy which begins and ends with more cars and more roads which will fatten the profits of its mates in the road construction industry. While hospitals reported record admissions and working class children in inner cities gasped for breath, Tory ministers spoke eloquently of 'our love of cars' and the basic freedom to pollute. We can expect nothing else from a government which has over the last 15 years contemptuously reduced a third of Britain's children to official poverty; we can expect nothing else while the Labour 'opposition' cringes in the face of simple questions. What is necessary now is that the anti-road campaigners give support to the railwayworkers.

The Revolutionary Communist Group will give you the straight answers. Our members have been active in the campaign against the Tory road programme, hospital closures, racist attacks and at every level where the working class is under attack. Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism! isn't frightened of simple questions and will give you straightforward answers. In September we launch a major series of public forums where you can be involved in our organisation and help build a real defence of the working class in Britain.

## COMMUNIST FORUMS

A new series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!

### LONDON

Sunday 11 September:  
Fight fascism – build socialism!  
Speaker: Maxine Williams  
2pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square,  
London WC1 (nearest tube Holborn).  
Entrance £1 waged, 50p unwaged.

### MANCHESTER

Wednesday 14 September:  
Fight fascism – build socialism!  
7.30pm Friends Meeting House,  
Mount Street, Manchester.  
All welcome.

# Support the railworkers

DAVE SPENCER

In the five years I have been on the railway I have experienced first-hand the devastation wrought on the industry and its workforce. In that time the busy commuter station I work at has lost half its staff, including those who worked in its now redundant signal box. Morale is a word whose meaning has been forgotten. Apathy is rife and resignation to management threats and imbecility is commonplace. Many of my colleagues are struggling to support families and pay mortgages on unrealistic pay packets. For many a flat week would not pay the bills. A half-decent take-home means working Sundays, restdays and all the overtime that is going.

The signal workers' overwhelming 4-1 vote in favour of strike action is long overdue. When looking at the basic rate they have been receiving, between

£146 and £225 a week according to grade, you could wonder why only now action is being taken. The introduction of new technology has seen a steep fall in the number of signal boxes with one new 'super box'



Railtrack boss 'Hatchet' Horton

replacing 40 or 50 old ones. Likewise, in the last 10-15 years the number of box workers has fallen by around 50% to about 4,500. In this time the responsibility and productivity of each worker has inevitably risen while the job has changed considerably. It is some seven years

since a call for the restructuring of pay and grading was made, and it is now more overdue than ever.

The initial bodged approaches made by Railtrack to the RMT suggest that there could have been room for a compromise agreement which would have suited both the management and the union while probably selling the members short. The unsurprising government intervention and the recent rumblings from Railtrack chairman Bob 'Hatchet' Horton suggest there are considerations other than a paltry pay and conditions settlement for what is, after all, a small group of people. The cost of one day's strike would almost have paid for a settlement. As with the miners, the government is no doubt prepared to spend whatever it takes to destroy the rail unions in the hope of making the dog's dinner of privatisation more attractive. The BR Board is being stuffed with Conservative Party benefactors who lack any rail experience. The appoint-

ment of Bob 'Hatchet' Horton, the butcher of BP, probably owes a lot more to his rationalisation skills than any knowledge of accounting or book keeping he may have.

The outcome of the signal workers' action is critical to all parties involved. With one year contracts, 'performance' related and flat rate pay, loss of special rates and allowances all on the cards, we have a lot to lose and a lot to fight for as railworkers. At the bottom line our very right to work is threatened. Now is the time that we should be working together across job and union barriers to support each other and in particular the signal workers in their just fight. Looking to the future we should be fighting for a 35-hour week at a living wage, for one rank and file trade union for the whole rail industry, and why stop there?

**Support the signalworkers! Saturday 30 July, 12.30pm. Assemble Grafton Place, Euston, London NW1 for demonstration called by the RMT.**

## Their money or your life?

CAT WIENER

From 13-14 July ozone levels over England and Wales rose above the Europe-wide safety threshold of 90 parts per billion for the second time in two weeks. The combination of the heat-wave and the huge increase in cars on the road during the rail strike created an atmosphere toxic enough for the government to warn people not to take outdoor exercise and for school sports days to be cancelled. In the same week it was revealed that in 1991, when nitrogen levels were high, an additional 40 people a day died in London.

One in seven children now have asthma thanks to increasing air

pollution. Hospitals no longer have enough beds to cope with the extra asthma cases caused by heat-wave smog. In German and other European city centres cars are now banned when air pollution levels rise too high. Yet Robert Atkins, the Environment Minister, argues 'There are differing views on what causes pollution. As soon as we get definitive advice, we will be in the right position to find a solution.' Why this coyness about the causes of a poison that is killing, according to the National Society for Clean Air, an estimated 3,000-10,000 people in Britain a year?

One need look no further than ex-Tory Party chairman Norman Fowler – Director of National Freight Consortium



Anti-M11 protesters at the Department of Transport

PLC. Or John 'Friend of Apartheid' Carlisle – Director of Bletchley Motors plc. And these are merely the tip of the iceberg. For it is the Tories' friends in the car, oil, freight and construction companies which make up the powerful road lobby who dictate the government's transport policy. Building contractors Tarmac, Trafalgar House and Wimpey donate undisclosed millions to Tory Party funds. This is why rail transport is being carved up

and privatised, while ever-more roads are being built to accommodate the estimated 142 per cent traffic rise in the next 25 years. It is no accident that the most recently appointed director of British Rail is Sir William Francis, previously director of construction of both Tarmac and Trafalgar House. It is to swell the profits of these road hogs that people are dying, children and the elderly are choking, and the environment is being destroyed.

## Stop the M65

PAUL DOBSON

A direct action campaign has been launched in Lancashire against the construction by Tarmac of ten miles of new motorway, costing £142 million, through green-belt land around the south of Blackburn. The campaign is organised by Lancashire Earth First! supported by Save the Heart of Lancashire, who have fought against the extension for five years.

The protesters have made their headquarters in a former police station. They call it the eco-police station.

When Tarmac began work the protesters blocked site entrances by throwing themselves in front of diggers and tractors, and chaining themselves to cranes and earth movers. They faxed a 'ransom note' to Transport Secretary John MacGregor saying that they would call off

the campaign if he provides £900 million to upgrade the London-Glasgow railway line. 'That's just 5 per cent of the government's road building programme,' said spokesperson Mark Johnson. Local people joined in and supplied the protest camp with food.

Despite Tarmac's use of Group 4 security guards the protest continues to grow in strength. Malcolm Doherty, Blackburn Labour Council leader, attacked the campaign: 'It is essential that this action by a small unrepresentative group of protesters is brought to an end as soon as possible.' He was backed by the East Lancs Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Blackburn Partnership and the editor of the *Lancashire Evening Telegraph*.

On 9 June two people were arrested for obstruction while attempting to prevent Tarmac felling a 200-year old beech tree.



By 15 June an eviction order had been granted and the bailiffs, protected by the police, moved in. Four more arrests were made as protesters barricaded windows, ripped out staircases and took to the roof. Some concreted themselves into barrels. Bailiffs used a hydraulic platform, cutting gear and sledge hammers and Tarmac demolished the house. Undeterred, on 20 June protesters chained themselves to a crane near Tarmac's headquarters in Liverpool.

Meanwhile the mad car culture grows apace. More and more land disappears under tarmac and concrete; thousands of people die every year in road

accidents; children cannot play out in safety; air quality deteriorates; asthma is on the increase; road sweeping is prevented by parked cars; public transport is starved of funding; pedestrians and cyclists take a poor second place in a system where people are subordinated to machines; music and art are degraded in advertising for the glorification of the car. To be against this car culture is to be against privilege and to take sides with the poorest millions of working class people who do not own cars.

The campaign is organising a mass trespass against the Criminal Justice Bill along the route of the M65 on 5, 6 and 7 August. Contact No M65, PO Box 237, Preston PR1 3TG or tel 0772 250558.



## Daylight robbery

Privatisation was always a means of transferring wealth from the majority of consumers to a very much narrower group of people who could afford to buy shares, while City institutions made millions underwriting and promoting them. Nothing of use or value was created. The rich simply got richer.

Some are already millionaires, or well on the way to getting there – and we are paying for it. Directors of the privatised water and electricity companies have made profits of over £12m simply by selling the shares they were able to buy as a perk of the job. If all the share options are taken up and sold, a total profit of more than £34m will be handed to the already highly paid directors of these companies. Resigning from the job can turn you into a millionaire overnight.

The managing director of Midlands Electricity resigned after a management shake-up in April 1993. The company's accounts show he left with a pay-off of £1.2m – £393,000 compensation with £262,000 in pension contributions and, with options to buy 145,000 shares at a price which will give him a profit of at least £4 a share, a further £580,000. Young and five other directors were able to buy around 600,000 shares at £2.58 per share when the shares were trading at between £6.34 and £7.32 – a potential profit of about £2.5m.

Directors at East Midlands Electricity took 770,000 share options yielding a profit of £2m. At Southern Electricity three directors exercised options on 240,000 shares which gave them a profit of over £1m. Water company directors are not far behind having made profits of around £4.5m after exercising their share options and selling shares since January last year.

Directors usually buy their share options with a bank loan and then sell enough shares to repay the loan. These are easy pickings – vast amounts of money handed out to the rich. So who pays for all this? The electricity and water industries are making enormous profits as privatised monopolies with little regulation. Their profits are well above pre-privatisation expectations so their share prices have rocketed from the cheap levels they were originally sold off for. The *Financial Times* even ran an article reporting the Electricity Company's profits under the headline 'How to disguise the embarrassment of riches'. Pre-tax profits of £1.8bn are expected for 1994.

## When health care = death sentence

The Health Ombudsman has noted a 'dramatic surge' in complaints about health care. He also noted that 'some people have come into the health service who know nothing at all about how to deliver health care'. This is a naive statement indeed. The government has brought in new tiers of hatchet-wielding managers whose main qualification is that they neither know nor care about health services. They do know how to cut costs though.

One method that has shocked the ever-innocent Ombudsman is the turning out of the chronically ill, especially elderly, patients into nursing homes. The hospitals doing this omit to tell the patients' families that they will face huge bills at these nursing homes. Often the move kills the patients. Basingstoke's Park Prewett hospital recently

ejected 19 patients from its psycho-geriatric ward and put them in private homes. Their consultant warned that six of them were too ill to move, and indeed three of these died within two weeks of the transfer. These severely ill patients did not even have GP cover for the first five weeks after the move. The very old, like the mentally ill, are not deemed productive and therefore worthy of treatment. Increasingly, the old and incurable are encouraged to 'die with dignity', the mentally ill to live on the streets.

A recent survey also shows that GPs are enthusiastically cutting costs by removing difficult patients from their books. Sometimes these are patients who have had the temerity to complain about their treatment. Often they are merely very expensive patients – the old, the chronically sick, the mentally ill. Around 30,000 patients were removed last year. These



patients are reported to have great difficulty finding a new GP.

These trends have been taken to their logical conclusion by dentists. It is now virtually impossible to find an NHS dentist. A recent well-publicised case revealed a dentist who had refused to treat children whose parents did not stop them eating sweets.

Soon only those in perfect health will be accepted for medical treatment. *Maxine Williams*

## BASTARDS

A round-up of the lies, dirty-dealing, corruption and avarice which pass for democratic government in Britain today.



The 12 regional electricity distribution companies were sold off for £5bn in 1990-1 and this included the National Grid thrown in for nothing. If the National Grid were sold again it alone could raise £5bn. So it was no surprise that the original share issue was 11 times oversubscribed.

The profits of the water companies rose by 20 per cent a year from 1989-90 to 1992-3. Aggregate operating profits were £1.87bn in 1992-3 a rise of 72 per cent on 1989-90. The share value of the industry is now about £13bn compared to the £5.2bn when sold off, and dividend payments have increased by 63 per cent a year over the period. In addition the water companies barely pay any tax, having been given tax allowances of £7.7bn as a sweetener, said to be necessary for successful privatisation. Some companies will have tax-free profits until the next century.

There is little evidence of increased productivity as a result of privatisation, although ruthless job cuts have taken place with the electricity companies planning an additional 9,000 redundancies in 1993-4 alone.

In the water industry operating costs have increased by 6.4 per cent a year, way above the original efficiency target of 3 per cent. A recent study of the electricity distribution companies concludes that privatisation did not improve productivity growth of most companies. The growth of productivity in the nationalised industries not

yet privatised has in fact outpaced that of those industries privatised. In 1992-3 the still nationalised industries increased productivity by 7.9 per cent, higher than the unusually high growth of 5.8 per cent for manufacturing as a whole.

So the high payouts to directors and shareholders of the privatised industries initially came from public funds as nationalised industries were sold off cheaply. Since that time an additional burden has been placed on all consumers with the poorest sections of the working class hit hardest.

Household water bills have increased by 67 per cent since privatisation – £2bn more than if charges had increased with inflation. The low paid have been hit hardest. Thousands have had their water cut off. In the highest charging area, South West Water, the average water bill of two adults and two children is now 4.9 per cent of income compared with 2.5 per cent before privatisation. It is 7.6 per cent of the income of a lone parent and 9.1 per cent for a single pensioner. Average electricity charges had increased by 21.4 per cent at the beginning of 1994 since privatisation in 1989 with typical household bills increasing by 11.5 per cent or 2.5 per cent above inflation.

Privatisation is daylight robbery. Consumers have paid higher prices and workers lost jobs so the hired hands of capital can be turned into millionaires.

*David Yaffe*

## A rich democracy?

So you thought you lived in a democracy where MPs diligently represent their constituents interests? Think again. Parliament has spent the last month desperately attempting to seal a can of worms – and this can of worms is jumbo sized. The *Sunday Times* revelations that two Tory MPs accepted pay-offs of £1,000 for tabling a parliamentary question, and two others were sorely tempted, is only a tiny glimpse of the corruption that pervades the Mother of Democracies.

Tory ministerial aides, David Tredinnick and Graham Rickard were slow to admit their fault, claiming that they had done no wrong. Fellow Tories were quick to blame News International journalists for entrapment. How dare these 'members of the Fourth Estate' offer felonious bribes ... Such contemptuous arrogance has not been seen since the days of the robber barons. The betrayal of the Murdoch press was painful, but not as agonising as the greater danger that widespread corruption might be uncovered.

The rules as they stand are lax. MPs only have to register their interest in the vaguest possible terms and they are free to accept whatever bribes they like. In addition to an income of £100,000 plus, many MPs hold directorships with major com-

panies and of course, ministerial office provides plenty of opportunity to promote political and business friends onto the boards of state-owned business – an open ticket to get rich quick at the taxpayers' expense. Our greedy representatives are happy to vote themselves pay rises beyond the expectations of ordinary folk like the signalworkers on the grounds that they 'work' long hours in their constituencies and Parliament. On top of this there is, apparently, a mint to be made at Westminster plc from arduous tasks like booking rooms, asking questions and wining and dining the corporate rich. If Britain's railworkers demanded such pay-offs for running trains there would be trouble, but in Parliament bribes just 'oil the wheels' of commerce and trade.

Alongside all this, a controversial Central TV documentary threatens more exposure of the lobbying network – if anyone can be persuaded to show it. In the untransmitted *Cook Report* on Ian Greer Associates, researchers posed as representatives of a US company acting for a fictitious company of Russians who wanted to take advantage of the Whitehall sell-off of Companies House and the Patent Office. In exchange for a fat fee Ian Greer's lobbyists offered to provide confidential information and set up meetings with junior ministers and parliamentary private secretaries. How would they manage that?

Happily for the bunch of leeches who masquerade as MPs, Parliamentary rules have allowed them to set up an Inquiry run by their less-than-impartial peers, meeting in secret, which should prevent any further exposure and allow business as usual.

*Carol Brickley*

## Another scandal tidied away

Was it a coincidence that the long-awaited Foreign Affairs Committee's report on the Pergau dam scandal came out on the day when Major's reshuffle dominated the news?

It found that the former Defence Secretary, Sir George Younger, was guilty of 'reprehensible conduct'. He was blamed for directly linking the sale of £1.5bn of arms to Malaysia to an overseas aid grant of £234m. The aid was to be used to build a dam. The builders were of course those sturdy supporters of the Conservatives – Balfour Beatty, Trafalgar House and GEC. The report also finds that these companies put pressure on Mrs Thatcher, who handled the negotiations, to make the offer of aid in order to induce the Malaysian government to buy British arms.

Mrs Thatcher, arms seller extraordinaire, escaped censure and indeed refused to attend the inquiry. Douglas Hurd and John Major, who both gave approval for the aid against the advice of officials who warned that the dam was uneconomic and indeed not necessary, also escape blame.

Sir George Younger, as is the tradition of public officials who are caught doing wrong in office, is doing very nicely thank you. He is Chairman of the Royal Bank of Scotland.

The beneficiaries are the arms companies and the construction companies. The losers are the Malaysian people and the British taxpayers whose money has simply been used to subsidise big business.

*Maxine Williams*

## Labour opts for Blair

ROBERT CLOUGH

Tony Blair's victory in the Labour leadership election was of course no surprise. Although nearly 4 million people could potentially have voted in the election, no one thought that they would in any way differ from the media consensus that Blair would be a very fitting Labour leader. And so it proved. Prescott was just too close to old-style labour aristocratic trade unions and Beckett was, well, just too female.

Blair is the apotheosis of the Labour Party; its most adequate representative. He is the consummation of New Realism, the strategy to win back those affluent workers and sections of the middle class who defected from Labour in 1979 and who still had not returned in 1992. Without Blair, Labour could not possibly win the next election.

Many of the left suggest that Labour can only win elections by moving to the left and attracting more working class votes. This is nonsense. If Labour got 100,000 more votes in Liverpool or Newcastle, it would not affect the seat count. To win it needs more votes in the south – middle class votes, votes of affluent workers. And that is why Blair is essential.

For instance, as Shadow Home Secretary, he has made himself deeply popular with the Police Federation and the Prison Officers' Association for siding with them when they were threatened by Tory proposals such as the Sheehy Report and prison privatisation. And, as Mike Mansfield recently showed, his position on the Criminal Justice Bill has been completely ambivalent. He has failed to oppose some of the key clauses such as the ending of the right to silence. In assuming the mantle of defender of Law and Order, Blair has identified himself with a vicious anti-working class standpoint in order to win the support of a privileged stratum of society.

Just in case there was any doubt, he spoke in a recent interview of how he didn't think that 'what people who are at the bottom end living on benefit require is simply a few pounds a week extra in benefit. What they require is a chance to work and get access to decent skills and training. In other words, there are different and better ways of redistributing power and wealth than simply taxing some people and giving that to the others.' A few moments later, however, and all that guff on training was exposed as empty posturing as he acknowledged that 'all the supply-side measures in the world on training and job programmes are not going to deliver full employment if the overall economic picture is one of decline.' So the poor don't really need more money, they need training for jobs that don't exist.

The strategy of New Realism required that Labour adopted an overtly middle class programme. Now it has also acquired a middle class leader with middle class mores, a middle class outlook, and middle class politics. Alan Clark, the former MP, commented in his cynical way about MPs that 'in former times there used to be a higher motivation ... Labour wanted to change the ills of society. (Now of course, all Mr Blair wants to do is "make the system work"). Indeed. And that will be at our expense.



## BBC bullies strikers back to work

JON GREEN

The recent dispute at the BBC has political roots. In the 1980s Margaret Thatcher ensured more direct government control over the BBC than ever before. Accountant Michael Checkland came in as Director General to apply Thatcherite 'free market' policies to public sector broadcasting.

Checkland's primary task was to cut costs, privatising all in-house support services with the loss of 3,000 jobs. When Birt took over, under the guise of safeguarding the future of the BBC through renewal of the Royal Charter in 1996 and guaranteed licence-fee funding, he set up an internal market system called 'Producer Choice'. Within a year of Producer Choice many business units were gearing up for another round of redundancies. Hundreds of thousands of pounds were wasted on 'management consultants'. Top managerial posts have been filled with Birt's yes-men.

In order to sustain Birt's policies the BBC wants more for its money from its staff. It is introducing a divisive performance-related pay structure, together with new draconian conditions of service. These proposals, led directly to the current dispute and resulting strike action.

In a ballot 80 per cent of members of the broadcasting union BECTU voted in favour of immediate strike action and with the support of the NUJ a hugely successful strike took place on 24 May. Another followed on 9 June.

The BBC has now moved to openly threatening staff with the sack. Underlying Birt's Victorian-style industrial relations is a political agenda: reducing membership levels and smashing the power of the unions at the BBC.

The threat of the sack clearly worried many workers who can't afford to be locked out. The BBC requested further talks on condition that industrial action be suspended. These are due to last 6 to 8 weeks and are simply a delaying tactic to get the BBC through the difficult summer schedule.

## Pensioners round-up

RENE WALLER

At last summer has arrived but many pensioners are not likely to have forgotten the struggle it's been to stay both warm and solvent through the long cold spring. Now we're all set not only to campaign against hospital closures and VAT on fuel but for a pension that keeps in line with the average wage.

Present government policy aims to keep the basic pension to the minimum necessary to avoid scandals: deaths due to cold or malnutrition. We must step up our collection of signatures for the petition to the Queen for an adequate basic pension for all, and we need to get the many campaigns against the threat to close specific hospitals co-ordinated.

# Class divisions widen

DAVID YAFFE

Another series of recent reports\* shows how the trend towards greater inequality both within the working class and between different classes has accelerated. Millions more working class families have been driven into poverty.

13.9 million people in 1991/2, 25 per cent of the population, lived in poverty, at below half average income, an increase of 8.9 million on 1979. Nearly a third (32 per cent) of all children, 4.1 million, also lived below this poverty level, 2.7 million higher than in 1979.

Income disparities (disposable income adjusted for household size and composition) have continued to widen over the last few years. Whereas average real income increased by 36 per cent after housing costs (AHC) between 1979 and 1991/2, that of the poorest 10 per cent fell by 17 per cent. For the next poorest 40 per cent of the population, the increase varied between zero and 23 per cent. In other words the poorest half of population either saw its income fall or rise well below the average.

The trend of rapidly widening income disparities continues as incomes increase. Moving into the top 50 per cent, the increase in income varied between 29 per cent and 62 per cent (see figure). As a result the

proportion of people living below average income has risen to 62 per cent (59 per cent in 1979) and those households with incomes above the average have seen their incomes rise rapidly: the higher the income, the higher the rise. These developments are not surprising given the Tory government's wage, taxation and benefits policies have been aimed at ensuring the allegiance of higher paid workers and large sections of the middle class.

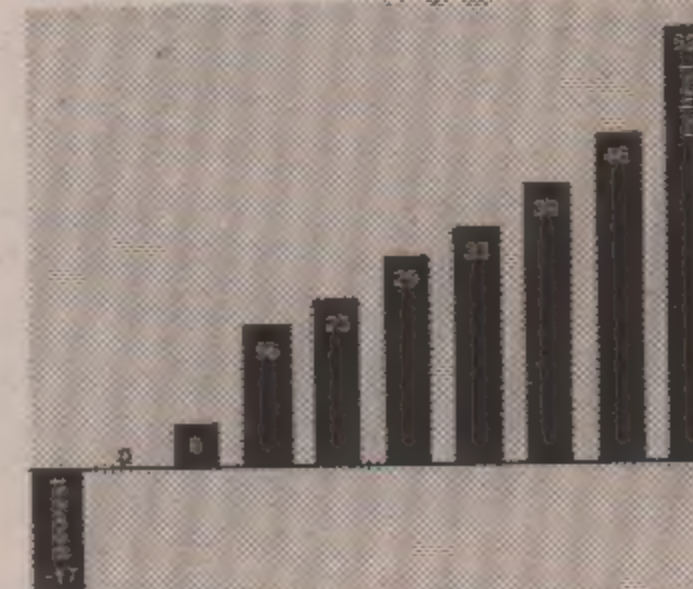
The bottom 10 per cent of the population has seen its share of total income halve from 4 per cent in 1979 to 2 per cent in 1991/2, with the bottom 50 per cent of the population seeing a fall in its share of total income from 32 per cent in 1979 to 25 per cent in 1991/2. The top 50 per cent, on the other hand, has seen its share rise from 68 per cent in 1979 to 75 per cent in 1991/2 with the top 30 per cent rising from 48 per cent to 55 per cent and the top 10 per cent from 21 per cent to 27 per cent.

The composition of the lowest 10 per cent income group has changed since 1979 mainly reflecting the rapid rise in the level of unemployment. This group now has more unemployed families, the proportion having increased from about 16 per cent in 1979 to 34 per cent in 1991/2. Single parents and the self-employed were both over-represented in the bottom 10 per cent. And overall cou-

ples with children constituted the largest proportion of the poorest 10 per cent in 1991/2 - 49 per cent, up from 41 per cent in 1979.

One of the major contributory factors to growing income dis-

Changes in real income 1979-1991/2  
Percentage income change after housing costs  
(10% bands of population)



parities in Britain has been ever widening wage differentials. Recent analysis of male hourly wage rates shows how over 15 years from 1978-1992 the real hourly rate of the 10 per cent poorest paid workers did not change, never regaining the wage levels of 1975. At the same time those in the middle had wage increases of 35 per cent and the 10 per cent highest paid got 50 per cent. The unprecedented changes over the last 15 years have created the biggest gap between the highest and lowest wage since statistics were first produced in 1886.

These changes are not accidental but reflect structural changes inevitable in an imperialist country on a path of con-

tinuous decline. The UK and US are alone in producing such large wage differentials, with those in the US even greater than those of here. In Britain there has been a collapse in available jobs for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Structural changes of significance are the fall in the number of workers in manufacturing from 39 per cent in 1969 to 23 per cent in 1990, together with the growth of those in the private service sector from 49 per cent in 1969 to 70 per cent in 1990. The scrapping of wage councils, the privatisation policies of the government, the increase in local pay bargaining and the large fall in the numbers of workers in trade unions are all additional factors which have contributed to this trend.

This clear evidence shows that British capitalism can only function by creating greater and greater inequality. It has important political consequences. Class divisions are widening and any government committed to policies acceptable to middle class voters to win the next election will only exacerbate such divisions. That is why no one who examines these economic facts should put any trust in or give any support to a Blair-Preziosi-led Labour Party.

\* Households below average income: A statistical analysis 1979-1991/2 HMSO 1994.

What has happened to wages? The Institute for Fiscal Studies June 1994.



On 2 July 2,000 people joined a demonstration against the Criminal Justice Bill - a mass trespass against the injunction against road protests on the Twyford Down site. Huge boulders were dragged across the road to form barricades and slogans chalked on the tarmac: 'houses, freedom, justice for all,' read one, 'not destruction, repression and profits for a few.' A speaker from the Freedom Network, which organised the event and has promised a long hot summer of further protests, added: 'We have to be totally on the case. It's up to us ... can you believe that? It's up to us.' For details of action against the Criminal Justice Bill contact Freedom Network on 071 738 6721 or No M11 Link Road Campaign 081 558 2638.

## Arrowsmith sacked workers - still fighting

MIKE VINE

Since 1988 the Arrowsmith company, a family-owned firm and the oldest print company in Bristol, has imposed wage-cuts and local agreements below national levels on its workers. After making numerous concessions, the union finally decided to ballot for industrial action short of a strike. This was carried by 98 to 14.

On 22 April we started an overtime ban to last four days. On 23 April all employees were given a letter to sign dissociating themselves from the union. No one signed. On 26 April we were all sacked. On 1 May contracts were delivered to all sacked workers containing a pay freeze for two years, lower overtime rates and no union recognition.

We were immediately denied unemployment benefit and only granted it five months later on appeal. The company has obtained an injunction limiting our actions and banning our presence near the premises. Our jobs were advertised at the local Job Centre: when staff refused to handle them seven CPSA members were disciplined and two members sacked.

However we have learned many things from this dispute:

- taking wage cuts is seen as a sign of weakness and employers will keep coming back for more
- there is no recourse under the Tory anti-union laws for our class
- the police are not impartial but an arm of the state
- the TUC should be campaigning to raise people's awareness of the need to oppose the Employment Laws and organising support for unions in conflict with these laws. The only way our class has progressed is by breaking laws such as these.
- the Labour Party should give a commitment to throw out all the Employment Laws introduced since 1979 and clearly identify itself with those in struggle.

It is our intention to continue this fight. With your continuing support and our resolve, together we can succeed.

For messages of support or donations contact Mike Vine, 45 Leinster Avenue, Knowle West Bristol BS4 1NJ tel: 0272 633164. Picket line tel: 0272 530208. Cheques payable to Arrowsmith Dispute Fund.

## Parkside Pit Camp - women fight on

BOB SHEPHERD

Although the government has largely succeeded in butchering the mines, Women Against Pit Closures' camp outside Parkside, Lancashire's last remaining pit, is still fighting to prevent the final closure of the pit.

On May 18 British Coal evicted the Pit Camp from its original site, using 30 bailiffs and over 200 riot police. Sylvia Pye, national chair of Women Against Pit Closures and a leading figure at Parkside Pit Camp was served with a court order which means she will be personally

sued for all the costs incurred by British Coal in obtaining their eviction order and any further action taken the Pit Camp. Within five days the Pit Camp was re-established opposite the entrance to the pit which is now guarded by a barbed wire fence and 24-hour security guards.

British Coal is now intent on transporting thousands of tons of limestone to the pit which will be used to fill in the mine shaft. If this happens the battle to save Parkside will be lost. The Pit Camp and its supporters are determined to stop this. They have held successful pickets, breaking into the site and

blocking the access road, stopping the lorries with the stone entering the site. On 16 July RCG members joined a large determined picket, which turned back two lorries. British Coal officials were forced to contact the stone company and cancel further orders for that day.

The next mass picket is on Saturday 6 August 7.30am with a rally at the Pit Camp at 11am. Donations for the Sylvia Pye National Appeal Fund are needed, c/o Common Road Nurseries, Newton-le-Willows, Merseyside WA12 9JJ. Parkside Pit Camp is on Winnick Road, Newton-le-Willows.



# Rwanda: UN is guilty

TREVOR RAYNE

UN Special Representative to Rwanda Jacques Roger Booh Booh was told of the planned massacre of Tutsi in March and the perpetrators were identified to him. In April with the slaughter underway, the 2,500 mainly French UN troops watched with folded arms. Booh Booh wrote: 'I have nothing to report. The UN should withdraw as its work amounts to nothing. It is time consuming and a waste of money.' Head of the UN contingent Brigadier General Romeo Dallaire agreed: 'there is no need to have [the troops] exposed unnecessarily.'

The UN troops withdrew and the killer government murdered half a million more people. Secretary of the Organisation of African Unity Salim Ahmed Salim exclaimed, 'It is absolutely incomprehensible for Africa that the UN should withdraw its troops from Rwanda ... at the very time its presence is required to end the massacre of



Rwandans demonstrate outside the French embassy in Brussels

innocent civilians.' Incomprehensible unless the UN is complicit in the slaughter - draining the Tutsi sea to catch the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) fish, and seeking to preserve the colonial-trained government army equipped with French and South African weapons. The

UN Security Council gave the murderous clique a seat and asked its member to address them; 'The Tutsis are responsible for the massacres,' he said.

By mid-June the UN was having second thoughts and France was given a UN mandate to send a 5,500-strong force into Rwan-

da. The RPF had rapidly taken half the country. French troops were briefed that Tutsi were massacring Hutu. What could they have made of it when they found government militia playing football with a Tutsi child's head?

France established a 'safe zone' along Rwanda's western border with Zaire. There they protected the remnants of the killer government and allowed it to continue its broadcasts urging Hutu to flee from the RPF.

As one million poured into Zaire and the scale of the chaos exceeded anything that France or the UN anticipated, with 5 million refugees and homeless out of a population of 7.25 million, the US government chose to act. Half of Sub-Saharan Africa was threatened with chaos. Britain announced an aid package worth £40 million, about as much as Unilever, with substantial African holdings, makes in half a day. ■

With thanks to Karim Essack in Tanzania

## Chinook crash: key British warmongers dead

SARAH BOND

The Chinook helicopter crash on 2 June struck a devastating blow to the British state's war effort in Ireland. On board were six MI5 officers, ten RUC Special Branch officers and nine army officers, who between them made up 'those in charge of the day-to-day management of the clandestine war against the IRA' (*New Statesman*). All perished.

The gang of conspirators travelling to a high level strategy meeting, would have been a choice target for the IRA. It has launched successful attacks on British helicopters, most notably last September in Crossmaglen when it engaged five helicopter gunships in a 30-minute gun battle. But this was an accident, the aircraft crashing into a mountainside near the Mull of Kintyre. Within a few days, graffiti appeared on a Belfast wall paraphrasing the well-known song: 'Mull of Kintyre - bodies rolling into the sea.'

It is not surprising that the deaths of these men should meet with such dry humour. It is they who have co-ordinated British terrorism in Ireland - the shoot-to-kill operations, the arbitrary arrests and beatings, the recruitment of informers, the collusion with Loyalist death squads. The three top men who died were RUC Special Branch boss, Assistant Chief Constable Brian Fitzsimons; MI5's Director and Coordinator of Intelligence (DCI) John Deverell and the British army's Assistant Chief of Staff for intelligence, Colonel Christopher Biles. These deaths leave just one man on the 'Province Executive', the top body set up in 1991 to oversee the suppression of Irish nationalists.

RUC Special Branch has also lost Fitzsimons' staff officer,



Detective Inspector Stephen Davidson, and two of its three regional heads, Detective Chief Superintendents Desmond Conroy and Maurice Neilly. The army lost all three of its regional representatives, all with the rank of major. MI5 lost Stephen Rickard, intelligence and security co-ordinator in the Six Counties.

But perhaps the greatest loss is John Deverell, DCI and MI5's number three. Deverell was head of the 70-strong MI5 team based at Stormont. He was also the principal intelligence adviser to Mayhew, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland. As head of MI5's F5 section which directs operations against Irish nationalists, John Deverell was behind Operation WARD, which sought to recruit informers amongst Irish people living in Germany in the early 1980s. His posting at Stormont was thought likely to be his last before retirement.

All of these warmongers can and will be replaced. But their deaths deprive British imperialism of some of its most experienced agents. They could have made no better contribution to lasting peace in Ireland. If only the rest of our class enemies would follow their lead. The only question is, what with the current defence cuts, would there be enough Chinooks to fit them all in? ■

## May Inquiry - the final cover-up

NICKI JAMESON

*The Return to an address of the honourable the House of Commons dated 30 June 1994 for a Report of the Inquiry into the circumstances surrounding the convictions arising out of the bomb attacks in Guildford and Woolwich by the Right Honourable Sir John May is the result of an 'investigation' as long-winded, elaborate and meaningless as its title.*

Meaningless, that is, for the Guildford Four and their families, who have suffered the 20 years of injustice that Sir John May now conveniently explains away. To the establishment, which is exonerated of all blame, the report is worth every penny of the £2 million plus of public money it cost.

Who framed the Guildford Four? Nobody, it seems. Not the Surrey police force, although they adopted a 'regrettable approach' (by twice arresting one of Carol Richardson's main alibi witnesses, once on suspicion of murder, threatening him, assaulting him and leaving him in state of disorientation and terror, for example); their behaviour is apparently comprehensible in the climate of 'public outrage over these bombings'. And not the Met, who perhaps should have investigated the involvement of the Balcombe Street Four in the Woolwich bombing a little more thoroughly but at whom May does not believe 'any criticism can be levelled...for not doing so.'

May also clears the judiciary; there is some mild reproach of the three judges who dismissed the Four's 1977 Appeal and a few remarks about limitations placed on the operation of the Court of Appeal, but praise is heaped upon the original trial judge, Justice Donaldson, for his fairness and carefully weighed

directions to the jury - this is the man who gave the Four the longest sentences ever handed out by a British court, including the recommendation that Paul Hill should serve natural life and never be released except on grounds of great age or infirmity.

And it wasn't the bureaucrats in the Home Office either; they dealt with all the applications made to them 'carefully and efficiently'.

Reading this report is like watching water trickle through your fingers. Every institution which could, should and must be blamed for what happened to the Guildford Four and others like them is superficially scrutinised and exonerated. May concludes that 'the miscarriages of justice which occurred in this case were not due to any specific weakness or inherent fault in the criminal justice system itself, nor in the trial procedures which are part of that system. They were the result of individual failings on the part of those who had a role to play in that system and against whose personal failings no rules could provide complete protection. For my part I would repeat the undesirability of the uninformed general criticism of the criminal justice system which has accompanied the high profile miscarriage of justice cases in recent years.'

So, offensive as this conclusion may be to the many victims of inherent flaws, failings and bias in the legal system, let's pursue its logic. Who are all the individuals who failed? Where are they? When is their trial? We know about the three police officers who stood trial for falsifying their interview notes in reference to Patrick Armstrong. We know how that trial was continually delayed by various manoeuvres by the legal establishment, how it was turned

into a retrial of Armstrong in his absence and how ex-SAS colonel Mr Justice MacPherson lent over backwards to ensure an acquittal. But what about all the others?

May does not name the guilty men and women; nor does he recommend their prosecution or sacking. Alastair Logan, who has been the solicitor to all the Guildford Four at various times over the last 20 years and continues to represent Patrick Armstrong and Carol Richard-



Sir John May

son, told FRFI that a complete set of false custody records were produced for the Guildford Four with a concocted account of how they spent their time in police custody. Both the false and the real records were put before Sir John May. He chose not to investigate this at all and instead to say that at 20 years distance it is impossible to determine what took place in the police station, with regards either to brutality (despite recent admissions during Paul Hill's Belfast Appeal Court hearing) or to falsification. So neither institutions nor individuals are blamed. As Paul Hill said soon after the report was published, the message to corrupt police is 'business as usual'.

Some play has been made in the press on the limitations placed on May by the Home

Office - he had no powers to demand documents or subpoena witnesses and Donaldson, for one, declined to give evidence to the Inquiry. But May himself imposed further restrictions, most notably the decision, after completing the first stage of the Inquiry which dealt with the Maguire family, to hear evidence in private. The main purpose of these hearings, at which remarkably few witnesses gave evidence, was a whitewash.

One group of people who do not get exonerated in the May Report are the Guildford Four. May finds that, 'the arrests of the Guildford Four were fully justified'. Why? Because the RUC had provided information about Hill and Conlon to the effect that they were IRA members.

Here, the unmentionable raises its ugly head once again. Try as they might, no-one can escape the link between the framing of the Guildford Four and the prosecution of Britain's bloody war in Ireland. Of course, the RUC and British Army intelligence had files on Hill and Conlon: they had both been detained and interrogated in Belfast. Most young men in the nationalist working class community of West Belfast have been arrested at some time or other by the army or police. The 'justification' for Hill and Conlon's arrests was a direct product of the repression of their community.

Alastair Logan is adamant that the hidden agenda behind the May Inquiry is an agreement in high places that the case of the Guildford Four has done enough damage and that it will not be allowed to do any more. He is horrified that the Inquiry can find nothing wrong with the system and that the judiciary, the CPS and the police can all now be totally complacent, and he points out the bleakest prospect of all, that May offers nothing whatsoever to prevent the same thing happening again to other innocent people. ■

## Loyalist terror

PAM ROBINSON

**While continuing to talk about 'peace' in public, the British government is giving licence to a relentless sectarian terror campaign against the nationalist population. By means of such unofficial terror and murder, they hope to erode popular support for nationalist resistance to sham peace plans.**

**Thursday 16 June**, Donegall and Falls Road junction West Belfast. Two UDA members entered a butcher's shop owned by nationalist Brendan McAuley and shot him three times in the chest.

**Friday 17 June**, Newtownabbey North Belfast. Loyalist murderers fired on a workmen's hut full of mainly Catholic workers. A Protestant worker Cecil Dougherty was killed and William Corrigan, a Catholic, died of his injuries.

**Friday 17 June**, Carrickfergus Co Antrim. Gerard Brady, a Catholic taxi driver, was murdered in his taxi after answering a bogus call. He was forced to drive to Carrickfergus where a

Loyalist death squad shot him in the head and back.

**Saturday 18 June**, Longhinishland Co Down. UVF murderers opened fire on O'Toole's bar which was crowded with mainly Catholic residents watching the World Cup. Six Catholics were murdered, including 87-year-old Barney Green, and another five injured. Rifles used in the attack were part of the consignment from South Africa which had been organised by British agent Brian Nelson. Democratic Unionist Party councillor Cecil Moore said the murderers were 'the defenders of the Protestant community ... their job is to defend Ulster'. He suggested the British army use the same tactics in Ireland that it used in Malaysia, where he served and where, he said, 'every face had these little slanted eyes and they all looked the same to me'.

**Saturday 25 June**. Two members of the Royal Irish Regiment and British army, and a Loyalist were charged with possession of explosives and charges linked to UVF murders and attempted murders. ■



Most people heard of Clive Ponting when, as a civil servant, he was unsuccessfully prosecuted for leaking secrets about the sinking of the Argentinian troopship *Belgrano* during the Falklands war. He deserves to be as well known for his book.

He debunks many myths that have been created about World War II and shows that the British ruling class went to war against Hitler with the utmost reluctance. Its overriding concern was to protect its colonial possessions. In reality Britain in 1940 was financially bankrupt and militarily incapable of waging war against Germany unaided. The Cabinet met on 22 August to face the fact that 'either Britain would become a dependency of the United States or it would have to seek peace from a victorious Germany.' Churchill may have orated about 'our finest hour' but the reality was that Britain was a declining power.

In the 1920s and '30s British military and diplomatic strategy was based on defence of its enormous empire rather than any intervention in Europe. Forced eventually and very reluctantly to war, the British ruling class had no interest whatsoever in fighting fascism. The First Sea Lord, Admiral Chatfield, said: 'We have got most of the world already, or the best parts of it, and we only want to keep what we have got and prevent others taking it away from us'. It was a choice between who would take most away – Germany or the USA. The communist position, prior to the change brought about by Soviet entry into the war, was correct. It was an imperialist war.

Recognising that it could not fight both Japan and Germany, British policy leaned towards reaching an accommodation with Germany. Britain was more than willing to sacrifice any part of Europe providing the Germans kept out of the Empire. The Munich Agreement which granted Czech territory (without consulting the Czechs) to Germany merely whetted German appetites. Even after Poland was invaded in September 1939, the British delayed declaring war in the hope that some settlement could be made with Hitler at the expense of the Poles.

Not surprisingly, France demanded British military support should a German invasion occur. It took intense pressure from France for Britain to begin to build up its army in Europe. Britain also deliberately rebuffed Soviet hints of a possible anti-German alliance. This played a part in pushing the Soviets towards their 1939 pact with Germany. British feelings were summed up by the Prime Minister's Private Secretary: 'Communism is now the great danger, greater even than Nazi Germany...we should play our hand very carefully with Russia, and not destroy the possibility of uniting, if necessary, with a new German government against the common danger'. As late as March 1940, the Supreme War Council met in London to consider detailed plans to bomb Soviet oilfields in Baku.

In May 1940 the German army invaded the Lowlands and France in a two-pronged attack. Allied forces in France rapidly collapsed. Ponting punctures the myth of German superiority in equipment. Their victories were speedy and devastating because of superior planning.

French opinion of Britain had been summed up in 1939 by Prime Minister Daladier who 'felt that England had become so feeble and senile that the British would give away every possession of their friends rather than stand up to Germany'. This proved accurate. In May, when the invasion began, British forces made up only 7% of total Allied forces in Europe. The main concern of the British forces in France was to retreat as fast as possible. They fled Boulogne within 24 hours and blew up a boat in the harbour, thus preventing other troops being evacuated. Whilst the Belgians were forced to cover the British retreat, the British attitude was summed up by a senior British officer: 'We don't care a bugger for the Belgians'. British evacuation plans had been kept secret from the Belgians and French.

The evacuation of Dunkirk began on

# WORLD WAR II CHURCHILL AND THE BIG LIE

The press and television have been swamped with D-Day. *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism* reviews two books by Clive Ponting which tell a different story.



Churchill on his return from the Newfoundland Conference 1941, where he consumed a vast amount of caviare: 'It was very good to have such caviare, even though it meant fighting with the Russians to get it'.

27 May under French cover. After two days 73,000 troops had been evacuated; just 655 were French. French troops were physically thrown off the British evacuation ships. The small boats that joined the evacuation and form part of British Dunkirk spirit mythology evacuated only 8% of troops. The British engaged in looting as they retreated, shot 'suspicious characters' and used illegal dum-dum bullets. A secret session of the House of Commons was later told that large numbers of British officers had deserted their troops to get on early boats. Demoralised British soldiers, once back in England, threw their guns out of train windows. Myths were consciously established: journalists were told to blame the French for not fighting. In fact, while British casualties were 3,500 killed, the French lost 120,000.

Following the defeat of France, the War Cabinet twice formally discussed whether to sue for peace with Germany. This while Churchill publicly called for 'victory at all costs'. In private Churchill's view was that 'if we could get out of this jam by giving up Malta and Gibraltar and some African colonies, he would jump at it'.

In the event, this proved unnecessary when the USA finally agreed to back the British war effort financially and militarily. Their price was what Churchill called a 'blank cheque on the whole of our transatlantic possessions'. British humiliation was complete when a US warship was dispatched to Cape Town, without consultation, to pick up the last remaining £50m of British gold. Henceforth the USA would rule the globe.

Ponting also debunks the idea that the war was a popular one in 1940. He shows that the condition of the working class was appalling and that war-time burdens fell most heavily on those least able to bear them. The Means Test was still in operation and a large number still lived below the poverty line. One in eight children evacuated from Newcastle had no proper shoes. No assistance was

at first given to civilian populations under bombing raids and thousands of people left towns each night to sleep in fields and caves. Meanwhile the children of the rich were speedily sent out of Britain. Not surprisingly there was little public interest or support for the war. Churchill's inclusion of well-known Labour politicians in the Cabinet, such as Ernest Bevin, was designed to win working class support.

There are many other gems in this book and Ponting has done a great service in revealing the extent of British ruling class cynicism, cowardice and self-interest.

Maxine Williams

*Churchill*, Clive Ponting, Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994, 900pp, £20.

Publishers are usually quick to take advantage of anniversaries to boost sales and the 50th anniversary of D-Day in June was no exception. Rehashed, relived and reinvented – the events of June 1944 were played out on screen and in print. Clive Ponting's book on Churchill, however, does not fit into this category. He does not just destroy Churchill's reputation – which was substantially self-manufactured anyway – he also attempts to grasp the real stuff of bourgeois leadership and the myths which are invented and reinvented to keep the idea alive.

Bourgeois history requires the creation of heroes and, rarely, even heroines, to drive events and to embody the ruling ideology for future generations. In the 20th century, Britain's 'greatness' is vested in the figure of Churchill – the small nation that fought heroically and almost alone to defeat the foreign barbarians; the British bulldog, courageous and independent; the lonely and eccentric Prime Minister who stood defiant while others crumbled, spending lonely nights solving the nation's ills in a Whitehall bunker.

The myth of great nationhood and great leader are deviously intertwined. No wonder, then, that there were shrieks of horror when Ponting's *Churchill* hit the bookstands – both myths were threatened with dissolution.

Churchill was a deeply unpleasant, snobbish little git, who from an early age decided that he was destined to be a great leader. His military exploits as a cavalry officer in India were designed to reap maximum publicity and his occasional heroism, helped by dum dum bullets and a profound contempt for 'the native', was contrived to bring renown. In the absence of opportunities for self-promotion, Churchill invented heroic acts for himself. The lack of a family fortune (his was squandered by his syphilitic father) did not prevent him from living in the lap of luxury – all his life he was attended by a valet who dressed and undressed him, tied his shoelaces, knotted his tie, turned on the bath taps (even when Churchill was in it), and dried him afterwards. He treated his wife and children contemptuously as a distraction from his political ambitions. His escape from a Boer prison in the Boer war was in fact achieved at the expense of two compatriots who had planned the escape, scuppering their own chances.

It takes Ponting 900 pages to encompass the activities of the liar Churchill from his birth in 1874 to his death in 1965 – and it is beyond the scope of this review to consider them all. Nonetheless there are certain themes. Ponting constantly refers to Churchill's racism, formed during his brief spell in India. It was ever present in Churchill's political career – from the enforcement of slave labour conditions for Chinese labourers in South African mines to his obsessive concern during the Second World War that the British people viewed black GIs more favourably than the whites and treated them with more respect than the US authorities liked.

He asked the US to withdraw all black soldiers from British soil and was relieved that the invasion on D-Day solved the problem of 'racial pollution'.

But Churchill's racism was not a personal peccadillo: it was not just 'typical' of his contemporaries. For Churchill it was at the very heart of his imperialist political standpoint. The white races, in particular the British, were superior. The Empire was vital to Britain's wealth and status; the Arabs, the Indians, 'natives' everywhere were necessarily subject to this overwhelming truth: 'I do not admit, for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, or 'at any rate, a more worldly-wise race, to put it that way, has come in and taken their place.' (Churchill on the Arabs in Palestine, p254). For Churchill, war was the most appropriate means of conducting international affairs.

This racist imperialist necessarily also had profound contempt for the working class and passionate hatred for socialism. After the First World War the dole was introduced for unemployed servicemen, and became a general benefit for the unemployed. In 1925 Churchill objected in violent language: 'It is profoundly injurious to the state that this system should continue; it is demoralising to the whole working class population... [it is] charitable relief; and charitable relief should never be enjoyed as a right.' In future, if Churchill had his way, the huge number of unemployed families would have to depend on private charity once their insurance benefits were exhausted. The Government might make some donations to charities but money would only be given to 'deserving cases'. (p304).

By 1924 Churchill had become Chancellor of the Exchequer and his first act was to reapply the Gold Standard at 1914 levels – a measure wholly in favour of the City of London and extremely detrimental to manufacture. Unemployment rocketed as a result. By 1926 Churchill was eager for a show-down with the unions and three days into the General Strike argued for an indemnity to be given to the armed forces to put down the strike by any means necessary. The defeat of the strike concentrated his ideas on revenge, with proposals for withdrawal of relief for miners' families ('becoming habituated to an indigent idleness') which were too foul even for his fellow Tories.

Churchill detested Bolshevism, as well he should, reserving for it special vitriol strongly reminiscent of Nazi tirades against the Jews: 'swarms of typhus-bearing vermin'. In the War Office in the early 1920s he approved the use of gas against the Red Army – a weapon he was always happy to use against 'non-whites': 'I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas...I am strongly in favour of using poisoned gases against uncivilised tribes.' (p258).

Above all Churchill was not a bellicose dinosaur left over from an imperialist age. He was a real embodiment of the imperialist ideology – and the myth still dominates Britain. Compare Churchill's record to Mrs Thatcher's. Modern Tories fastened on to Churchill's rotting corpse. Thatcher's determination to destroy the miners in 1984 could have been modelled on Churchill's behaviour during the General Strike. Thatcher's 'culture-swamping' speech against immigration, and unswerving support for apartheid South Africa were the very stuff of Churchillian 'statesmanship'. Listen to the echo across the years: Churchill on the unemployed; Portillo and the squirt Lilley on the unemployed. And although Britain now rarely goes to war without the US in charge, Thatcher eagerly sent her Task Force to quell the 'native' invasion of the Falklands, sank the *Belgrano* and then lied about it without blinking. And that's where Ponting enters the scene...

Carol Brickley



*'A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of Communism.'*

These are the opening words of the most influential political pamphlet of all time - the Manifesto of the Communist Party. Written by Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, it was published on the outbreak of the European-wide 1848 revolutions. It was not merely a pamphlet but the programme of a revolutionary class. Throughout the 19th and 20th century, the Manifesto and the varied international attempts to put its ideas into practice enraged the wealthy ruling elite of every country. The Manifesto after all unashamedly declared:

*'... you reproach us [Communists] with intending to do away with your property. Precisely so; that is just what we intend.'*

*'You are horrified at our intending to do away with private property. But in your existing society, private property is already done away with for nine-tenths of the population; its existence for the few is solely due to its non-existence in the hands of nine-tenths.'*

An alternative vision of society - based on communality not competition - was propounded with fierce confidence. But it was not merely a vision; there have after all been many Utopias in history. For the first time the Manifesto offered a scientific analysis of historical progress and an agency for bringing about the emancipation of humanity. Capitalism itself produces a revolutionary class, a class with nothing to sell but its labour power. Its historical mission is to bring about socialism so that:

*'In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.'*

The struggle to put these ideas into action has proved harder than anyone could have predicted. The ruling class has often deliriously announced that it has finally vanquished this age-old enemy, sometimes by force, sometimes by claiming to have solved the problems associated with capitalism, usually by a combination of the two. Never have such calls been louder than since the collapse of the socialist countries in the 1980s. But despite 'the monotonous sound of the trumpet that indecently announces the perpetuity of liberalism and the end of utopias' (Tomas Borge) a reader can find much in the Manifesto as relevant today as in 1848.

### Socialism or barbarism

Marx and Engels believed that the Manifesto was expressing the entrance onto the social stage of a new force, the working class, capable of liberating not just themselves but society as a whole. They were brimming with confidence that the bourgeoisie could be defeated: 'Its fall and the victory of the proletariat is inevitable.'

But Marx and Engels did not believe that socialism was historically predetermined. The Manifesto warns of both the possibility of 'a revolutionary reconstitution of society at large, or ... the common ruin of the contending classes.' Socialism or barbarism.

Historical 'inevitability' was conditional on conscious human action. And the Manifesto's main aim was to rouse the working class to action, to highlight the objective course of capitalist development and chart the path to working class liberation. Thus the famous call 'The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Working men of all countries unite!'

The emancipation of society can come only from the action of the exploited and oppressed. If they do not take the decisive steps or are

# THE COMMUNIST MANIFESTO

## A world still to win

As part of an occasional series re-evaluating major works of communist literature, EDDIE ABRAHAMS and MAXINE WILLIAMS ask whether the Communist Manifesto still has relevance for today.



defeated in the attempt, then capitalism continues its barbarous course. In 1848, no one could envisage quite how barbarous that course would be, a course which has brought humanity and this planet to the brink of catastrophe.

### Profit is all

No late 20th century critic of capitalism can rival the burning passion of the Manifesto. The authors might well have been describing the selfishness, the contempt for human morality so striking in this neo-liberal age. Today, when barely an inch of the globe does not bear the hallmarks of capital there truly remains 'no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous "cash-payment".' The bourgeoisie has ensured that all values, all morality, all honour is drowned 'in the icy water of egotistical calculation. It has resolved personal worth into exchange value ...' The bourgeoisie 'has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into paid wage-labourers.' It has produced a culture which is 'for the enormous majority, a mere training to act as a machine'.

If so in 1848, in capitalism's youth, how much more now, in its selfish dotage? It resembles one of its ageing Californian beneficiaries in its determination to live forever, to conceal its wrinkled flesh and buy the vigour that belongs only to youth. Its symbols today are the junk-bond dealer, the men who grow fat from famine, the besuited pimps of the media industry, the bankers who conjure vast polluted cities into existence and whose decisions have ensured that the very mechanisms that allow life to exist are being poisoned at source. Its culture is at once both murderous and soporific. Witness the spectacle of the richest nation on earth transfixed by televised images of an ex-footballer charged with murdering his wife fleeing police capture.

Already in 1848 we find a powerful critique of the logic of capital -

production for profit. Those who today talk of the global economy, of the internationalisation of communication and culture follow in the pamphlet's footsteps. 'The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country ... it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood.' As a result 'we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations.'

The Manifesto was written too early to chart, as Marx did later, the transformation of free competition into monopoly and the associated trend toward world monopoly capitalism, imperialism. This is the age of the giant multinationals, of Microsoft, Toyota, Coca-Cola, of Disneyland, of Hollywood, of the international 'best-seller', of MacDonalds from China to the USA, of international pop-stars and internationally celebrated criminals. Marx and Engels, who understood the internationalisation of capital, could not foresee the division of the world between oppressed and oppressor nations. But they hinted at the role of the first emerging capitalist countries 'whose cheap commodities are the heavy artillery with which it batters down all Chinese walls.' Those countries which first trod the path of capitalism have created a system of exploiting the poor nations which produces super-profits and which has had profound consequences for the development of the working class movement internationally.

Whilst understanding the ability of capitalism vastly to develop the productive forces, the Manifesto also explained its inherent instability, its barbaric and self-destructive character. Capitalism which has 'conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells.'

The Manifesto describes the inherent contradiction between production for profit and the sheer scale of modern productive forces. Capital-

ism in all its phases expresses this contradiction in an obvious way: theoretically the scale of modern production could provide the whole world with enough food, housing, education etc. It does not do so because if production is only for profit then it will produce only that which is profitable, be it Coca Cola or microchips. Capitalism relies on exploiting the mass of people, precisely depriving them of real necessities. Periodically it expresses the contradiction more dramatically.

The Manifesto describes capitalism's tendency to crisis that has been its most enduring characteristic. 'Society suddenly finds itself put back into a state of momentary barbarism; it appears as if a famine, a universal war of devastation had cut off the supply of every means of subsistence; industry and commerce seem to be destroyed; and why? Because there is too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce. ... The conditions of bourgeois society are too narrow to comprise the wealth created by them.'

Such crises have been more the rule than the exception in the past 150 years. The post-war boom, one of the longer periods of stability, has given way for the past 20 years to what are called 'recessions' but are merely the usual crises of profitability. Such prolonged crisis merely accentuates capital's tendency towards international competition and, ultimately, war.

One of the most criticised aspects of the Manifesto in modern times is its prediction that the worker:

*'becomes a pauper, and pauperism develops more rapidly than the population and wealth. And here it becomes evident that the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an overriding law. It is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him.'*

In the era of TVs and fridges, and cars and computers, say the critics, how can this be true? If they removed their Eurocentric glasses they would find these are the conditions of the vast majority of the world's working class, those who live in the oppressed nations. And a growing portion of those in the rich nations have also been denied seats at the banquet. However, a section of the working class in the rich nations has indeed grown privileged and their loyalty to their benefactors has had a huge and negative political influence in the working class movement.

### The role of the working class

A demonstration of the inability of capitalism to meet basic human needs and proof of this system's inherent instability was not sufficient for Marx and Engels. They wanted to demonstrate that capitalism produced a class whose very conditions of life drove it to revolutionary action. Under capitalism the '... modern labourer ... instead of rising with the progress of industry sinks deeper and deeper below the conditions of existence of his own class.'

Driven to revolt against this misery, the working class emerges as a revolutionary class and, with the development of industry, it 'not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more.' And then begins the journey of humanity 'from the realm of necessity to the realm of freedom'.

*'... The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority in the interests of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air.'*

Can the working class of the late twentieth century play this role? In the rich nations, its political development has been dominated by the outlook of the privileged - reformism, rather than the revolutionary anger of the exploited. The defeat of the Soviet Union and the socialist countries also seems a telling blow. Finally, in many countries, the workers are not becoming more concentrated but more atomised. In such a brief article such huge questions can only be raised rather than dealt with.

To those who say the working class cannot play this role we would counter-question: who else can? It remains the case that the majority of the world's population consists of those without property and power. On their shoulders rests the whole construction of profit-making. And it remains the case that capitalism is inherently unable to provide the majority with the means of life. Those who criticised the Soviet Union are quiet now as the reintroduction of capitalism dissolves the gains the working class there made: employment, health care, literacy. The crisis-ridden character of capitalism is depriving not only the poorest of the world of life, but increasingly imposes insecurity on workers in the rich nations.

History does not pose questions that it cannot answer. The working class has indeed changed in composition and character since the Manifesto was written. But the necessity for it to change society has not disappeared. It struggles on in many forms, in many nations with its fight against World Bank-imposed development, against privatisation, against police states. Its task has become both harder and more urgent. For when Marx and Engels wrote the Manifesto they could not see a day when the struggle was not merely for human progress but for human life itself. Capitalism has brought ruination to the earth as well as its people. We have a world to win and not long to do it.

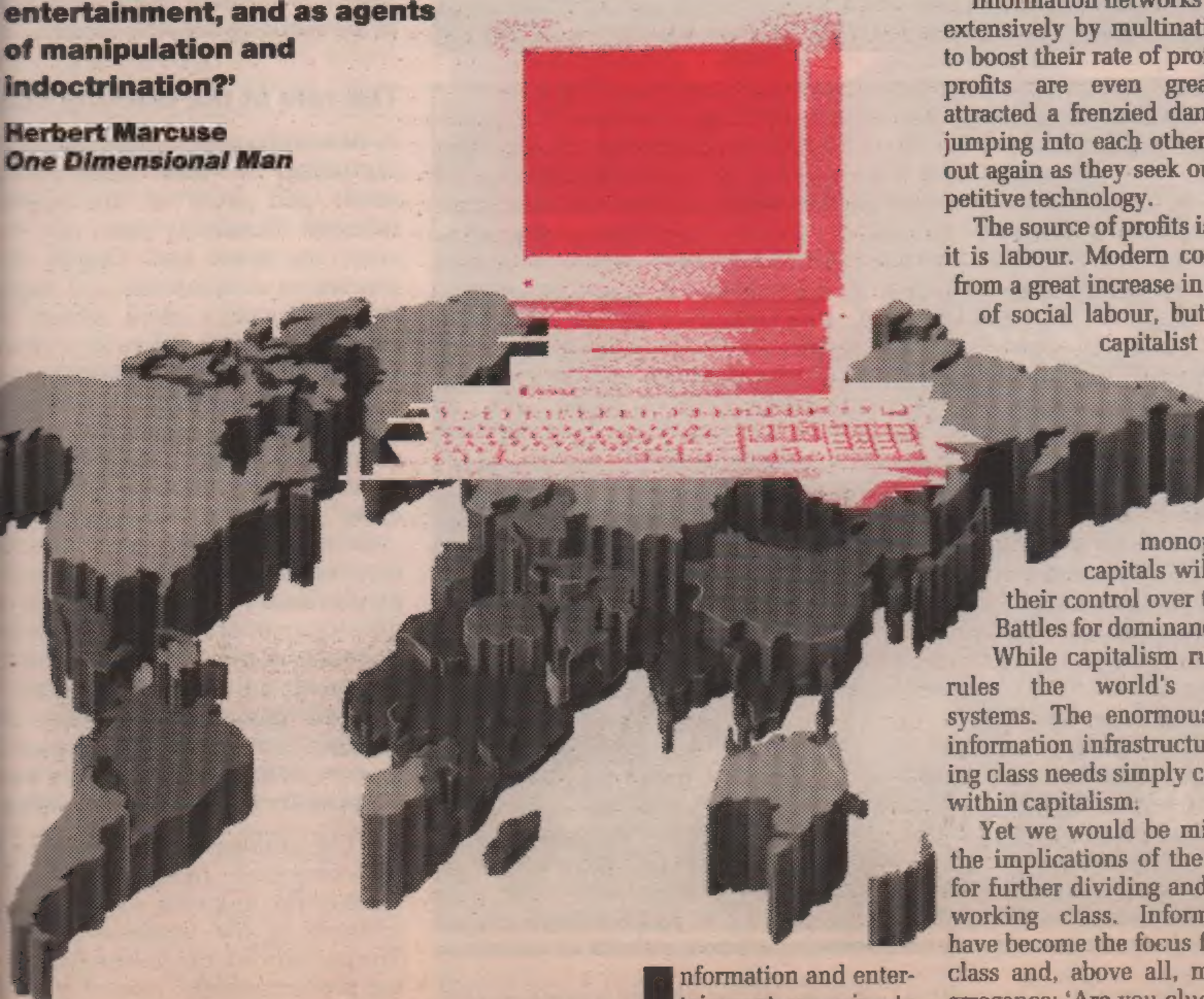


**'In the most highly developed areas of contemporary society, the transplantation of the social into individual needs is so effective that the difference between them seems to be purely theoretical. Can one really distinguish between the mass media as instruments of information and entertainment, and as agents of manipulation and indoctrination?'**

**Herbert Marcuse  
One Dimensional Man**

Information and entertainment are at the centre of the new global markets that contemporary capitalism is s  
In a series of articles Ian Bradshaw shows that fundamental to the new network technologies is the drive for

# The Greatest Show



Information networks are already used extensively by multinational companies to boost their rate of profit. The potential profits are even greater, and have attracted a frenzied dance of capitalists jumping into each others arms and then out again as they seek out the most competitive technology.

The source of profits is not technology, it is labour. Modern computing springs from a great increase in the productivity of social labour, but while within a capitalist framework the benefits are squandered.

Out of capitalist competition springs capitalist monopoly. Competing capitals will seek to impose their control over the new markets. Battles for dominance will break out. While capitalism rules the world it rules the world's communications systems. The enormous promise of an information infrastructure serving working class needs simply cannot be realised within capitalism.

Yet we would be mistaken to ignore the implications of the new technology for further dividing and fragmenting the working class. Information networks have become the focus for white, middle class and, above all, male technocratic arrogance: 'Are you clueless? Every society is divided into people who know what is happening and people who do not.' (Jack Schofield, computer editor of *The Guardian*)

Schofield and his ilk are so caught up with their privileged infatuations that they have lost all critical faculties. Indeed nothing could be more clueless about capitalism than the *Guardian's* own new

supplement, 'In the communications revolution, it won't be a little red book you'll be reaching for. It'll be OnLine'.

So what is happening in this society? Capitalist information technology may offer a desktop revolution for 'techno-literate' middle class men, but it threatens a cultural counter-revolution for the mass of humanity.

## Here comes the Superhighway

The hype pushing information highways has reached fever pitch in the US and is still rising here. Parliament has just voted itself £6m for a data and video network. A week hardly passes without yet another promotion to join an elite 'virtual community' on the Internet (providing you have at least £1,000 entrance money of course). Across the country roads and estates are being dug up to lay the cables that will soon pipe yet more televisual junk into our homes.

The key players pushing these new markets are corporate giants from the previously separate industries of computing, entertainment, broadcasting, electronics and communications, drawn together and yet at the same time competing for the massive potential profits.

The Clinton/Gore administration is fighting hard to be ringmaster of this great circus, but the truth is that Japanese and other players do not accept US direction willingly. Behind the scenes arms are being twisted, before long they will be wrenched.

## Roots of the network technology

The roots of the new network technologies lie in long term decisions made by the US ruling class. Following the great

US propaganda victory of getting the first man on the moon in 1969, much of which was reversed by 1974 with its crushing defeat in Vietnam, the state directors of the enormous 'military-industrial complex' had to do some serious strategic thinking.

The US had to shift its focus and apply the technological advances gained through the space programme, using them to consolidate a broader political and economic advantage both over the Soviet Union, and against its up and coming capitalist rivals.

The early 1970s were years of ideological preparation which unleashed the radical right wing counterattack later led by Reagan and Thatcher. They were also years of preparation for a new technological infrastructure intended to reinvigorate the US economy.

Research into the first 'packet-switched' communications network was commissioned by the US Department of Defense in 1969. The critical military requirement was to build a flexible information network that did not rely on one central command centre, i.e. to avoid a point of vulnerability which could be destroyed thus incapacitating the whole network. The network was made sufficiently robust by distributing its intelligent functions across many nodal points. Any station in the network was able to communicate with any other by sending a stream of information parcelled up into little packets of data, each with its destination address. The intelligence came in switching the packets around the network through different routes and then reassembling them on the last leg of the journey.

The US military had funded universities to develop increasingly sophisticated packet switching networks through dif-

**'We found out . . . that all the bread we made for Decca was going into making little black boxes that go into American Air Force bombers to bomb North Vietnam.'**  
**Keith Richards**  
**Rolling Stones**

Information and entertainment are going to be packaged as addictive leisure pursuits and sold as commodities; commodities which are at one and the same time mass cultural products, agents of control and vehicles for profit making.

**'It could have been anything we sold: shoes, records, it's all the same.'** Sam Goody, founder of one of the

# Well it's one for the

**D**espite popular belief, the record industry is not just a channel for artists' creativity: it is in fact one of the largest and most profitable businesses in the world. In Britain alone, record companies made £1.1 billion in 1992 (down from a peak of £1.2 billion in 1989). In that same year, 56% of all people in the UK bought at least one album and 43% bought one or more singles. The vast majority of record companies are subsidiaries of large conglomerates and are integrated into the whole framework of corporate finance.

But despite these vast profits, like all other capitalist industries it falls prey to repeated crises. These lead to the growth of monopolies and the requirement of greater and greater levels of investment in order to make a profit. This process leads increasingly to the exclusion of smaller independent companies, who have neither the resources nor the subsidies offered by parent conglomerates.

## The same old song

The record business as we know it began in earnest in the early 1950s, when records took over from sheet music as the dominant form of selling music. The record industry was an important part of the postwar mass consumer economy.

In the 1950s, the 'race music' coming out of US inner cities started crossing over to white fans, and the major record companies began to take an interest in it. But they had neither the expertise nor the inclination to record such artists them-

selves, so took to re-recording the songs with their own white artists (Pat Boone being the most famous). Not only did these cover versions have the advantage of the majors' superior distribution, network disc jockeys invariably played them instead of the originals.

This meant that the original artists lost out. The mainly white owners of the independent record labels for which they recorded the original songs could actually benefit from the successful covers however, as the artists' contracts often included clauses passing all publishing rights to the label owners. And even when the writers did own the copyright they often received none of the royalties owed them. Also, instead of money, inexperienced artists were often palmed off with a Cadillac worth a fraction of what they were owed.

But cover hits alone were not enough to sustain a rapidly expanding business. Although it is possible to make money on a single, the massive overheads involved in promotion make profitable singles the exception. Instead it is to albums that record companies look for their real profits. In the 1950s the album charts were the province of middle-of-the-road singers and light orchestral favourites: invariably the creations of record company A & R men. By the mid 1960s however these charts began to feature albums by 'beat groups' like The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and The Animals (who had almost all become successful with covers of songs by poor black artists), then 'rock bands' like The Grateful Dead and

Jefferson Airplane, all of whom had an enormous creative input into the finished product. At first this made financial sense for the record companies: successful bands could now sell albums, not just singles. But as albums became more important, so they became more expensive to record, and the companies ended up pouring money into expensive equipment and lengthy sessions which rarely paid off.

## What's going on?

The 'pop' market is a notoriously hard one for the majors to control: unlike other industries, sales depend on the ongoing creative process of the artist and the unpredictability of public tastes. And each label's share can be massively influenced by just one big album or artist. In 1992 Prince earned \$35 million (gross), U2 \$27 million and Michael Jackson \$26 million, vastly improving the fortunes of WEA (Warner Music), Island (Polygram) and Epic (Sony) respectively. However, few artists achieve anything like these figures (as few as 10% of artists become significant commercial successes) and a run of unsuccessful acts can see a company's market share plunge dramatically.

In such a risky business, and with so little understanding of the marketplace, record companies cannot tell which bands have the potential to succeed, so they sign up any bands who fit the mould of the latest successful group and use a 'throw as much as you can at the wall and see what sticks' approach. To make this

worse, as record companies have expanded and high level finance and deal brokerage become of greater importance, the lawyers and accountants (most of whom have no real interest in or knowledge of music) become far more powerful. This means that now creative decisions are made farther and farther away from those who actually do understand the consumer markets or the creative process. And it was this trend that George Michael was attempting to fight against in his recent court case.

The search for short term profit leads to a faster turnover of acts, the promotion of acts that appeal immediately to the mainstream and a move away from the nurturing of young acts (the way companies achieved their greatest successes). Few record companies now have any acts that can look forward to long term careers: the vast majority are dropped after one album if the company do not see any immediate profits. If this attitude had prevailed in the 1960s and early 1970s, artists like Bob Dylan and Bruce Springsteen (who took two or three albums to reach any sort of major success) would never have had the careers they did.

## Complete control

Record companies are constantly trying to control public taste, either by exploiting new fads or by actually manufacturing 'stars', but although it is possible to manufacture hits in such areas this is very costly. Fads (eg the disco 'boom' of the mid 1970s) produce hit singles but rarely

produce hit albums in anything like high enough quantities to justify the massive investment necessary. And the teen phenomena of the mid 1980s such as New Kids On The Block, Kylie Minogue and MC Hammer (creations of record companies and skilful managers, like the clean-cut teen idols of the early 1960s and the 'glam rock' bands of the 1970s) were by definition ephemeral and thus unable to sustain long term album sales. They were also very costly to promote and maintain: expensive items like elaborate stage sets and videos were needed to try to buy into a potentially lucrative fanbase rather than building upon natural sales.

To combat this the record companies looked to more 'alternative' rock acts such as REM and Nirvana, who had their own fanbases already. However in order to obtain these bands the majors had to pay out vast sums to the labels to whom they had originally been signed. And, in their quest for greater and greater profits, the companies again upped the stakes by spending more and more on videos, recording costs and advertising. This in turn made breaking an act in the alternative scene, once a relatively inexpensive process, a much more costly one.

## Radio Ga Ga

From the earliest days of the business, record companies, radio and TV stations and the manufacturers of musical hardware went hand in hand. Then as now, conglomerates used their record division to stimulate sales in other divisions. In the



...driving to create under the snappy title of Information Superhighway.  
...new spheres of capital accumulation and monopoly profits.

# on Earth

ent transmission media. Firstly  
ough dedicated telephone lines, then  
ng mobile telephones and then via  
ellite systems. Before long it became  
ecessary to create standard rules by  
hich the different networks could link  
The US Department of Defense com-  
missioned the Internet, 'interconnected  
works', ostensibly a public access  
medium.

n fact access was still limited to the  
ilitary, NASA and other state agencies,  
iversity personnel who passed security  
arance and commercial organisations  
o bought in. The network's electronic  
il facilities became popular with its  
ers who quickly set up all kinds of dis-  
ussion forums. Hackers began to find  
ys into systems they weren't even sup-  
posed to know existed.

This led to the snowballing phenom-  
on of people eagerly finding ways to get  
mselves onto 'the Net'. The voluntary  
ms of communication and apparent  
ence of a single control authority has  
ouraged electronic sub-cultures in the  
now spreading outwards to other rich  
untries, not unlike an earlier craze for  
radio. And there has been an opening  
of library information for those with  
ess onto the network. But the Internet  
om, now replete with Californian gurus  
claiming a new anarchic Utopia, the  
versive People's Net and so on, re-  
mains essentially elitist.

## multinationals seize on networks

e potential commercial advantages of  
ect computer to computer communica-  
as were soon evident. Before long  
e-based communications networks  
re being put into place for big business.  
pital markets all over the world began  
conduct their transactions through

electronic means. The multinationals  
seized on the new technologies, shaping  
them to service their own operational  
requirements for speed, reliability and  
security.

While distinct competitive advantages  
accrued through better co-ordination of  
market information, the special boost that  
data communications gave to profitability  
was through speeding the turnover of  
capital. Endowed with its new technical  
means, multinational capital could be re-  
employed more rapidly or even switched  
across the globe.

Though higher profits *appear* to stem  
from the wizardry of telecommunications  
practitioners, the process obscures the  
*real* source of these additional profits. An  
efficient capital is one that can effectively  
appropriate the surplus value of more  
workers in a given time period. Tele-  
communications did not create addi-  
tional value, rather it enabled big capital  
to increase its exploitation of the working  
class.

The providers of information networks  
for multinational capital have emerged  
alongside the oil majors and banks as key  
players within the imperialist economies.  
US telecommunications giant ATT made  
£45bn sales in 1993, and British Telecom  
made £13bn sales. BT (valued at £23.1bn)  
lies between Shell (£23.4bn) and BP  
(£22.5bn) as one of three biggest compa-  
nies in Britain. ATT is valued at \$74bn  
(£47bn).

Yet today the telecommunications sta-  
tus quo is being challenged, with the  
technical and commercial establishment  
built up over the last 15 years itself now  
facing an 'information revolution'. To  
understand what lies behind capitalism's  
new hard drive on networks we have to  
trace parallel developments in the micro-  
electronics and computer sectors.

## The microchip counter-revolution

No company epitomised US leadership of  
the post-war capitalist boom better than  
IBM. At its peak in the mid 1970s IBM  
accounted for 80% of commercial com-  
puting sales in the whole world.

IBM's domination had grown ripe for  
attack from without and within. The  
German and Japanese economies that had  
been re-capitalised by the US after World  
War II were beginning to challenge and  
even accelerate past the US in many engi-  
neering and manufacturing sectors.

Taking expenditure on research and  
development as the indicator, the world's  
information technology companies are  
now led by Hitachi of Japan and Siemens  
of Germany, with IBM a close third. Each  
of these companies spent £3bn on re-  
search & development in 1993. Even  
more telling, no less than seven out of the  
top ten are Japanese companies.

Such levels of investment have  
brought enormous gains in the processing  
power of computers. The cost per unit of  
raw IBM mainframe computing has fallen  
from \$800,000 per Mips (Million instruc-  
tions per second) in 1974, to \$200,000 per  
Mips by 1986 and about \$80,000 per Mips  
by 1993. To put it the right way round,  
even by this conservative measure the  
productivity of social labour building  
mainframe computers had increased ten-  
fold in less than twenty years.

The key technical breakthrough was  
achieved by integrating complex transi-  
stor circuits onto a single chip of semi-con-  
ductor material. This had two significant  
consequences in breaking the IBM mono-  
poly. The first was a shift in power to the  
chip manufacturers, who were able to  
realise their technology investments in  
all manner of applications from con-

sumer goods to robotic production lines.  
From 1985 until 1993, when it just lost  
the lead back to the US, Japan led in  
micro-chip manufacture.

The second consequence of cheaper  
computer hardware was a shift of initia-  
tive to suppliers of software that could  
make the raw power available in a usable  
way.

If the personal computer has been the  
flagship of the modern software industry,  
then Bill Gates of Microsoft must be its  
captain. Microsoft is the world's biggest  
selling software company (its software  
now runs 80% of all personal computers)  
making Gates, with an estimated worth of  
\$8.2bn, the richest individual in the US.

Though still a much smaller company  
in terms of sales revenue, Microsoft's  
monopoly profits are so high that its stock  
market valuation of \$29bn rivals that of  
the embattled giant IBM's \$33bn. Once  
the innovator, Microsoft is now frequen-  
tly involved in court battles as it tries to  
strangle innovations from its competitors.

The company is no longer simply a  
software producer, it is a financial giant  
with a base in software. Microsoft is run-  
ning with cash assets of some \$1.4bn,  
ready to be thrown into whatever projects  
Gates sees a future in.

The sums of money are becoming  
incredible. The Japanese company NEC is  
making a final decision whether to locate

its next factory in Scotland or California.  
The £660 million plant will employ 500  
workers. One of US Digital's two Scottish  
plants already has an output worth £2bn a  
year.

The two biggest chip manufacturers in  
the US are Intel (\$24.7 bn) and Motorola  
(\$25.0bn). Intel executives know that the  
success of the highest volume chip maker  
in the world relies on rapidly expanding  
sales: 'In 1993 world unit sales of PCs out-  
stripped sales of cars for the first time.  
PCs are moving beyond the corporate  
arena to become basic commodities with  
the general public.'

Intel has sunk billions in production  
facilities for its latest 586 'Pentium' series  
of chips and is desperate to realise the  
investment. The company plans to spend  
£100m on advertising computers using its  
chip, a further £100m on a world-wide  
television campaign aimed at software  
games players and claims that, 'in the US  
we are the third most remembered brand  
name after Marlboro and Coca-Cola,  
thanks to our advertising.'

Monopoly capital has launched a  
massive indoctrination programme to  
stimulate new addictions of mass con-  
sumption, just so that it can go on making  
its super-profits. It is nothing less than a  
cultural counter-revolution. Whether or  
not it can succeed is another matter alto-  
gether. ■

## biggest record retailers in the US.

# money...

d to late 1950s, the growth of the record  
business fostered a substantial increase in  
sales of radio sets, especially in the  
outh and car markets, which in turn  
nulated more record sales.

Conglomerates also use their broad-  
casting resources in order to exploit con-  
sumer taste: as RCA did, employing the  
t influence of its US television net-  
orks to break Elvis Presley nationwide.

The technological improvements  
made possible by the research and devel-  
opment budgets of the conglomerates  
ng new formats that can boost sales in  
ethods of slump. Columbia Records won  
advantage by introducing the high  
elity long play record in 1948, so in-  
er to re-establish themselves RCA hit  
k by introducing the 45 rpm record. In  
er to stimulate sales of the new format,  
company marketed a new cheap 45  
n record player through their hardware  
ision. Again the process was symbi-  
ic: it was in great part due to the intro-  
uction of the two new formats that sales  
record players increased enormously.

However, research and development  
new technology are already practi-  
cally monopolised by the major record  
panies and their parent conglomer-  
es, making it hard for any independent  
ord company to develop its own tech-  
ology.

ny for nothing  
strated at not breaking new artists,  
ord companies have recently  
tempted to get people to buy old albums

on a new format. This worked in the  
1980s with the CD but, despite massive  
financial investment, there has been no  
interest in newer formats like DAT, DCC  
and Minidisc.

Whilst the Monopolies and Mergers  
Commission recently cleared the record  
industry of selling CDs at too high a price,  
CDs are certainly sold at a substantially  
higher price than the cost of manufacture.  
Prices are set at what people are willing to  
pay, not what the CDs cost to make (com-  
panies actually charge an even higher  
price for records by best-selling artists,  
even though those albums' greater sales  
reduce the unit cost).

## Under my thumb

Record companies can also outlast times  
of recession because they are part of a  
much larger corporation that can sustain  
them when sales are low. Record compa-  
nies are often heard to complain that  
videos, computer games and the like are  
detracting from record sales, but this does  
not harm their parent companies: they  
invariably have interests in each of those  
areas.

The big six names that dominate the  
field are: Japan's Matsushita Electronics  
Corporation and Sony Corporation,  
Germany's Philips Electronics NV,  
Holland's Bertelsmann, Britain's Thorn-  
EMI plc and the US company Time  
Warner Inc. Between them they own all of  
the most successful record companies,  
including: Polygram (Philips), EMI, Sony  
Music, Warner Music, MCA (Matsushita)

and RCA/ BMG (Bertelsmann). And those  
record companies themselves own all the  
major labels: Columbia and Epic (Sony);  
Warners, East West and Atlantic (Warner  
Music); Virgin and Chrysalis (EMI);  
Polydor, Phonogram, Island, A&M  
(Polygram); Arista (BMG); etc. Plus the  
vast majority of the 'independent' labels  
are now in effect subsidiaries of these  
majors: Creation (Sony); Food (EMI);  
Motown (MCA); etc.

Although most of these parent compa-  
nies have been involved in the creative  
end of the entertainments industry for  
many years, the two Japanese companies  
are relative newcomers. Sony had been  
badly burned when it launched the  
Betamax video system: it lost out to JVC's  
inferior VHS system simply because it  
did not have enough software (ie films) to  
accompany the system. Having learned  
its lesson, before launching its new  
Minidisc system it bought up CBS  
Records (comprising the Columbia and  
Epic labels: home to Michael Jackson,  
George Michael and Bruce Springsteen)  
in 1987. Matsushita made a similar move  
late in 1990: taking over MCA Records  
(who themselves had just taken over  
Tamla Motown in 1988 and Geffen  
Records - home of The Eagles, Jackson  
Browne and more recently Guns And  
Roses - in 1990).

As with other industries, the record  
industry has followed the familiar pattern  
of growth, consolidation and monopoly.  
It has also fallen prey time and again to  
the inherent contradictions of capitalism.  
In their continuous quest for higher and  
higher turnover, the record companies  
have seen overheads grow, the stakes  
raised and thus the rate of profit fall.  
Records have become more and more  
expensive to record and promote, need-  
ing to achieve massive sales in order to  
recoup the money put into them. Record  
companies are thus constantly searching  
for mass sales and any music with a

minority  
audience finds  
it harder and  
harder to sur-  
vive.

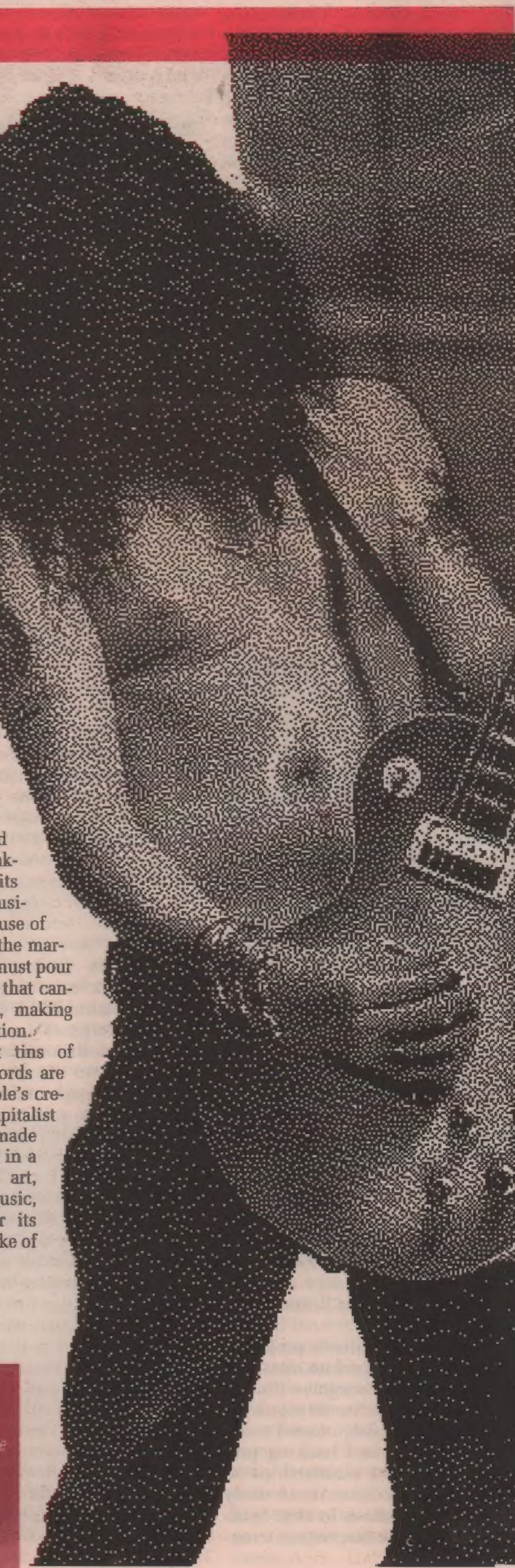
## And in the end...

As we have seen,  
from the earliest  
days of the record  
business, recorded  
music has been used  
simply as a way of mak-  
ing money, both in its  
own right and to sell musi-  
cal hardware. But because of  
the unpredictability of the mar-  
ket, record companies must pour  
money into campaigns that can-  
not guarantee success, making  
for a highly risky operation.

And records aren't tins of  
baked beans: good records are  
the summation of people's cre-  
ative processes. In a capitalist  
society, even art is made  
into a commodity. But in a  
socialist society, all art,  
including recorded music,  
would be fostered for its  
own sake and for the sake of  
the people.

William Henry

Future articles will  
examine the political  
content of the music,  
including an analysis of the  
attempts to make  
progressive and  
revolutionary music and  
the forces that have held  
back those attempts.





# Crisis in Turkey

'It's no longer a financial crisis. It's no longer an economic crisis. It's a political crisis', was how one Istanbul banker described Prime Minister Çiller's 5 April austerity programme. The programme is intended to restore the Çiller government's credibility to the multinational banks. 'This will inevitably have a dramatic effect on living standards, particularly for manual employees,' observed the *Financial Times*.

As the Turkish bourgeoisie struggles to bring down its foreign debt and budget deficits under International Monetary Fund direction, intensified class struggle is inevitable. The outcomes are of profound importance, not just for the Kurdish national liberation movement and the Middle East, but for imperialism's plans for the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. Can the Turkish bourgeoisie be integrated into the European bloc? Will socialism rekindle in the Turkish working class or will Islamic fundamentalism advance? TREVOR RAYNE examines the role of Turkey in multinational capital's plans.

The Gulf War and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 highlighted the strategic significance of Turkey to US and European capitalism. Turkey provided key bases for the attack on Iraq. While using Turkey to defend oil supplies, multinational capital saw Turkey as a conduit for investment into the former Soviet republics. The then economic minister Çiller described the role in 1992, 'We feel we can form the bridge between Western partners and both Russia and the Turkic culturally related republics.' Across the bridge would pass technology and finance in exchange for cheap labour and raw materials. The vehicle would be joint ventures and banking credits.

During an unprecedented combined visit to Ankara in January this year by British Foreign Minister Douglas Hurd and his German counterpart, Hurd described Western Europe's relationship to Turkey as 'not a luxury but a necessity'. Stable conditions desired by multinational capital for exploiting the region were rocked with wars in the Caucasus and Balkans; Iraq had been replaced by Turkey's neighbour Iran as the menace to US dominance over the Middle East, and the Turkish state itself was unable to suppress the Kurdish liberation struggle. Foreign

tries gathered in Ankara to sign an economic cooperation agreement, intended to become a new economic community. These initiatives are frustrated by regional instability. However, for US and European capitalism the whole role of Turkey as an ally and conduit for surplus capital is most jeopardised by Turkey's financial crisis.

## Multinational investment

The principal attraction of Turkey to multinational capital is cheap skilled labour. Between 1980, year of the last coup, and 1989 real wages fell from a base equivalent of 100 in 1980 to 56.7 at the beginning of 1989. Militant trade unions were destroyed; just one in nine workers were unionised.

After the coup, restraints on foreign investment and repatriation of profits were removed, tax and duties for foreign firms lowered. A massive transfer of wealth to the Turkish bourgeoisie and international finance from the working class and peasantry took place. The share of rent, interest and profit in total income grew from 34 per cent in 1976 to 58 per cent in 1984, while agricultural and non-agricultural wages and salaries fell from 66 per cent to 42 per cent. Former Prime Minister and IMF official, Turgut Ozal, said Turkey will become 'the Japan of the Middle East'.

Between 1954 and 1980 total foreign capital invested in Turkey was \$228 million. Between 1980 and 1991 this sum grew to over \$4 billion, 57 per cent of it from European countries. However, in the year following the Gulf War foreign direct investment rose by over 20 per cent to \$960 million. US investment quadrupled on the 1990 figure to \$450 million. The majority of European investment came from Germany. By January 1992 2,047 foreign companies were operating in Turkey. In April this year 35 per cent of all equities traded on the Istanbul Stock Exchange were held by foreigners.

Major multinational investment has gone into car production. Turkey's two largest car firms are Tofas, a joint venture with Fiat, and Oyak Renault in which the French company joins capital with the Armed Forces' Pension Fund. Petrochemical products are made under licence from ICI, Shell, Mitsubishi and Mitsui. Eczacibasi Holding is the owner of Turkey's leading pharmaceutical firm with a turnover of \$1 billion in 1992. It is engaged in joint ventures with James Rivers, American Standard and Procter and Gamble of the USA, Nokia of Finland and Marazzi of Italy. It has just opened a pharmacy in Moscow. It accounts for half Turkey's legitimate drug exports.

Turkey's biggest industrial holding company Sabanci operates a dozen joint ventures with companies such as Dresdner Bank, Philip Morris, IBM and Toyota.

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have about 1,000 foreign joint ventures underway, the majority of them involving Turkish companies linked to multinational capital. Turkish contractors have over \$1 billion invested in Russia and the Ukraine. Turkey has 3,000 registered companies in Bucharest. Coca Cola's Turkish bottling plant supplies Romania. Fibre optic cables are being laid to link Istanbul with the Black Sea countries. These investments have required an infusion of European and US equipment and loans into Turkey.

All this reveals that Turkey is not just a low cost production base on the periphery of Europe, but a means of organising international capital and distributing it for purposes of accelerated exploitation for 'a vast area stretching from the Dalmatian coast to the borders of China' (*Wall Street Journal*). It is precisely that organising capacity that is undermined by Turkey's financial crisis.



Tansu Çiller, prime minister of Turkey

## British investment

It is appropriate that Tansu Çiller employs the same public relations firm as Margaret Thatcher did when she was Prime Minister. Thatcher it was that made the first European invitation to 1980 coup leader General Evren when he visited Britain in 1988. Such courting was done, of course, for all the 'best' possible commercial motives. Nevertheless, Britain has straggled behind Germany and the USA when it comes to winning contracts.

In April, the British Chamber of Commerce in Turkey ran a two day seminar called 'Opportunities in Turkey'. Held in London it was addressed by ministers and ambassadors from both countries and was intended to boost British investment in Turkey. Most British capital has gone into infrastructural works. Gama, the Turkish company contracted to repair Moscow's White House, has been joined by Thames Water plc in a \$700 million water supply scheme for the city of Izmit. Balfour Beatty helped build a major highway between Istanbul and Ankara. Alexander Gibb is working on

the GAP dam hydro-electric and irrigation project. BP runs a chain of campsite holiday complexes along the Mediterranean.

Notably Unilever, with sales worth \$800 million a year, is the largest food company in Turkey. It supplies 100 brands to a third of Turkey's food retailers or *bakkals*. Ten per cent of its Turkish output is exported to Middle Eastern and Black Sea countries.

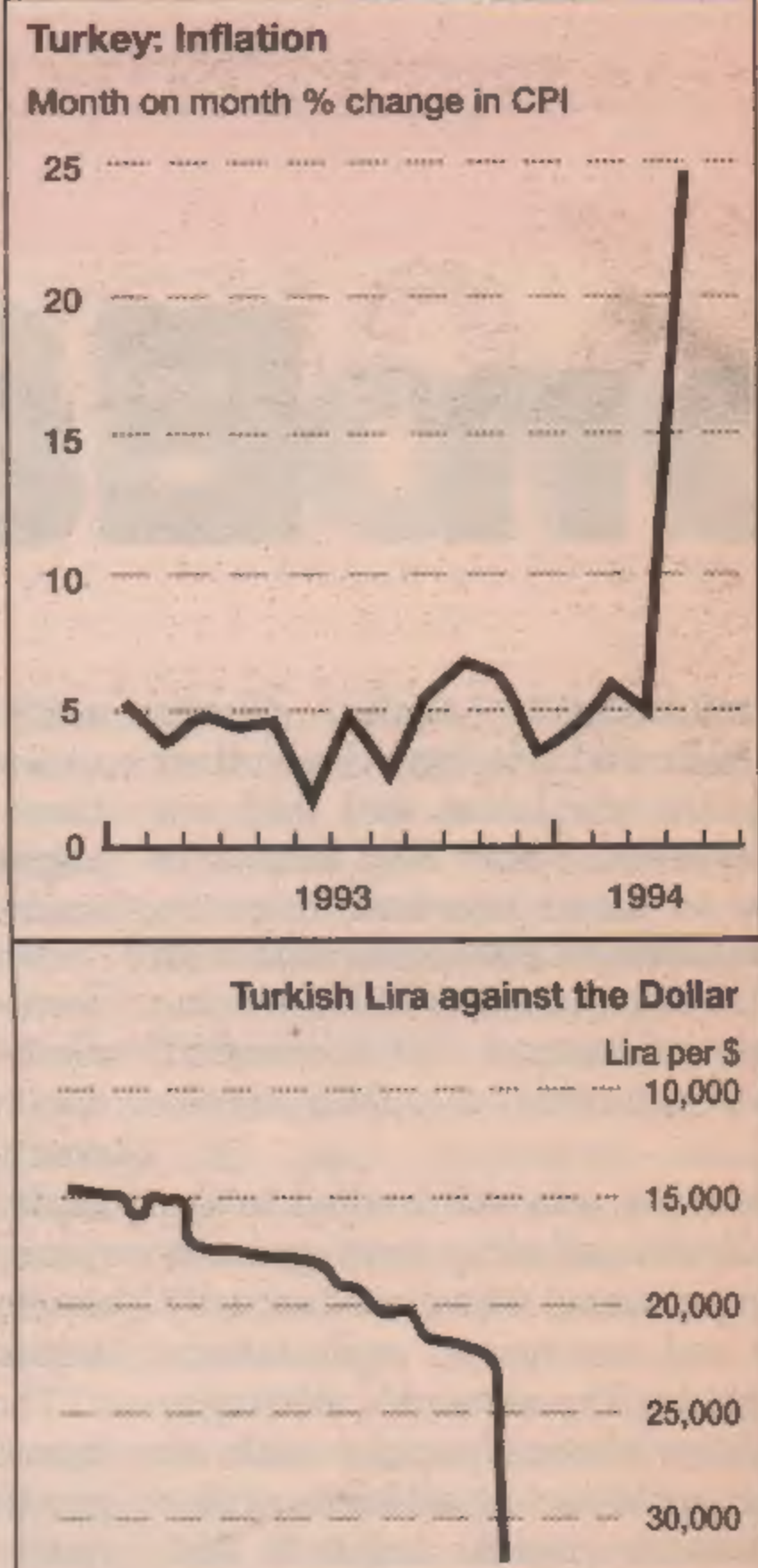
## Military spending

'Last year alone, Turkey received a total of 1,071 main battle tanks – almost as much as the entire holdings of the British Army – from the US and Germany ...' (*Financial Times*, 7 June 1994).

Recognising that its global leadership required it to dominate the Middle East, the USA made Turkey the third largest recipient of aid after Israel and Egypt from 1985. Much of the aid is military. After the Gulf War a \$4 billion Gulf Defence Fund was established under US sponsorship to mobilise Saudi finance in part to strengthen Turkey's defence industry.

US corporations have pumped capital into developing a Turkish arms industry for both domestic deployment and export. General Dynamics produces the F-16 fighter in a joint venture. However, as European capital begins to compete with the USA for influence in the region, so their arms producers have invested in Turkey. Dutch, Spanish, Italian, German and French firms are all tied into Turkey's military production complex. The British company Marconi produces battlefield wireless systems near Ankara. Land Rover combines with the Turkish Otakar to supply militarised versions of its product for the state forces.

Arming Turkey is expensive. Between 1988-92 Turkey spent more on



conventional weapons imports than Iraq, \$6.2 billion. The war on the Kurds has significantly increased the military budget. War expenditures alone in 1993, conservatively put at \$4 billion, (but probably nearer \$6 billion) exceed the entire 1990 military expenditure.

Arms expenditure has fuelled Turkey's foreign debt and budget deficit. Together these produced an exchange rate collapse in the Spring which threatened to turn into a full-scale banking crisis. Now the IMF has descended on Turkey and intends that Turkish workers should pay the bill.

The austerity programme introduces public sector job cuts, price rises, tax increases, privatisation, removal of farm subsidies, wage cuts, credit and investment restrictions. These will begin to bite by the Autumn.

Part two will examine the social and economic crisis and its political consequences.

## Kurds targeted in Britain

The only potential source of terrorism in Britain identified by name alongside the IRA in Stella Rimmington's maiden MI5 broadcast were the Kurds. A programme to criminalise Kurdish and Turkish opposition in Europe to the Turkish state is being coordinated by British and German police and military intelligence, together with their Turkish counterparts. The programme includes mobilising sections of the British media and academics to prepare the public for major criminal charges and draconian sentences, systematic liaison and passing of information between British and Turkish police and the establishment of special units to survey and attack the Kurdish and Turkish communities.

Since the 1992 Newroz (Kurdish New Year) massacre of over 100 people by Turkish state forces, a series of articles have been planted in the US and European press. In Britain these are written under Home Office and police guidance for the *Times*, *Sunday Times*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Independent* and *Evening Standard*. They have a consistent pattern in which a series of Home Office and police officers make unproven accusations that supporters of the PKK and Dev Sol practice extortion and run protection rackets around the country. Recently the broadcasting media have been deployed to repeat the same message.

The Metropolitan Police announced in July that they were setting up a special team to tackle crime and ter-

rorism in the Kurdish and Turkish communities. Blatant surveillance operations by police camera crews have been installed in north London. Photographs of arrested Kurds and Turks are routinely taken and then disappear, presumably to reappear on Turkish police files. Relatives in Turkey of people in Europe suspected of supporting the PKK are in grave danger of police raids, torture and death.

The Turkish Human Rights Foundation report for 1993 lists six journalists and eight newspaper distribution workers murdered; 51 journalists in prison with sentences totalling 231 years; 260 publications and 33 books banned; 28 people disappeared; 17 killed in detention; 135 killed in police raids; 510 murdered by 'persons unknown'; 3,758 killed in fighting in Kurdistan; 874 villages forcibly evacuated or burnt down.

On 3 August 6 MPs go on trial in Ankara facing charges which carry the death penalty; five are from the Democratic Party which the Turkish state banned in June. Their 'crime' is to seek a political solution to the Kurdish-Turkish problem. The rest of the 18 Democratic Party MPs who have been deprived of their parliamentary seats have either fled to Brussels or gone underground. The British government and police are complicit in the persecution.

Emergency Meeting called by Friends of the Democratic Party, 28 July 7.30pm ULU Mallet Street, London



First item on the agenda

ministers went to reassure Çiller and the generals that they would extend the war against the Kurds to the Kurdish population in Europe, that they would provide Turkey with the material it needed to maintain this war and that they would integrate Turkey into their regional military operations. Turkish troops have served with the UN in Somalia, Turkish F-16 jets under NATO command enforce the UN No Fly Zone over Bosnia and Turkish troops are now stationed there under a British commanding officer.

In keeping with Çiller's projected role for Turkey, the Turkish state was the first nation to recognise the six central Asian former Soviet republics in 1991. It immediately offered training to diplomatic and banking personnel plus 10,000 scholarships to people from these countries to study at Turkish universities. In 1992 leaders of eleven Black Sea region coun-



# Korea – imperialism lays siege

**K**im Il Sung's death has precipitated a new round of imperialist diplomatic, political and military manoeuvring against socialist Korea. They are hoping that political uncertainty and instability following his death will lead to the emergence of 'moderates' prepared to negotiate with imperialism and lead the way to the restoration of capitalism throughout Korea. The propaganda against socialist Korea has presented a picture of an impoverished nation, with millions living in rural poverty on the edge of starvation, cowed by a concentration camp regime headed by a megalomaniac demi-god. What is the truth?

## Socialist achievements

The 1994 UN Human Development Report refutes the most vulgar charges against North Korea and demonstrates the social achievements of the Northern government. Life expectancy is 70.4 years in the South and 70.7 years in the North. Daily calorie intake in the North is above that of the South and is at 20 per cent above the minimum necessary for health. Food production per person in the South has fallen by 5 per cent since 1981 while in the North it has grown by 4 per cent. As a result, the North needs to import only 8 per cent of its food whilst the South imports 50 per cent. In the South there is one doctor per 1,370 people, in the North one doctor serves 370 people. Infant mortality rates in both parts of the country are virtually identical. The 99 per cent literacy rate in the North is higher than that of the USA. Such statistics place North Korea way ahead of most Third World nations.

## Popular revolution . . .

These achievements were recorded in the face of an unending imperialist military assault against the DPRK. On 6 September 1945, the DPRK was declared after the overthrow of Japanese colonialism by the national liberation movement, led by communists, at whose head stood Kim Il Sung. Two days later a US invasion force under General MacArthur landed in the South. He declared US military rule south of the 38th parallel and proceeded to construct a government of former Japanese colonial stooges in preparation for war against the socialist North and China.

The imperialist plans were countered by radical reforms which built a powerful popular base for the DPRK. In the North, agricultural reform was implemented alongside the nationalisation of key industries, transport, banking and foreign trade. Feudal land-ownership was attacked from above by legislation and below by peasant committees. The reform went in stages with an initial reduction in peasant rents followed by a peasant mobilisation for 'land to the tiller'. Land confiscations were made without compensation, but the land was not taken as state property; it was left with the peasantry. However, they could not sell, lease, or mortgage it, thereby preventing the emergence of a new landlord class. These measures secured the solid support of the peasantry who constituted 80 per cent of the total population of North and South Korea.

During the Korean war the peasants joined the communist organisations in the North: many had been impoverished and saw little future in

Following the collapse of the socialist bloc in Europe, US imperialism has directed its anti-communist crusade against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Using the pretext that North Korea was preparing a nuclear weapons system, the US has sought to isolate, undermine and blockade the country and bring it to its knees. Its ultimate ambition is to destroy the socialist

North and incorporate it into the capitalist South. In the aftermath of the death of President Kim Il Sung **TREVOR RAYNE** and **EDDIE ABRAHAMS** explain the historical and political background to imperialism's attacks on Korea.



Seoul campus protest at government ban on support for North Korea

private plots. They joined a voluntary movement for cooperative agriculture even before the technical foundations for higher productivity were laid. Richer peasants were not expropriated but with the state controlling the distribution of commodities, raw materials and financial resources for expansion there was little further benefit in private enterprise. Just as the shift from feudal to private commodity production, so the move onwards to cooperative farming was also achieved peacefully by 1959. By 1990 the DPRK grain output was five times the 1946 figure.

## . . . and counter-revolutionary war

In 1948, the Soviet Red Army which had helped the Korean revolutionaries defeat Japanese colonialism withdrew from the North. The US on the other hand could not withdraw from the South without risking the collapse of its stooge Syngman Rhee regime. This regime was battered by wave upon wave of popular revolt, inspired by the North, demanding land reform and national independence. Between 1945 and June 1950 100,000 people in the South had been killed in what was effectively a national democratic war of independence.

Having by such means consolidated their position in the South, imperialism and its stooges prepared for war against the North. In September 1949 the US learned of the Soviet achievement of an atomic bomb. On 1 October Mao Ze Dong declared the People's Republic of China. The US began mass production of nuclear weapons and long range B-36 bombers capable of striking deep into Soviet and Chinese territory. Along with US and British re-armament, the US sought the rapid reconstruction and re-armament of Germany and Japan to hold on to its strategic dominance against the Soviet Union. US imperial circles considered holding the line in Asia as vital to securing their positions in Europe. Korean unification in the interests of the popular struggle North and South for self-determination was impermissible.

After a series of border clashes a full-scale war between the Korean People's Army (KPA) and the US-backed Republic of Korea's (ROK) forces broke out on 25 June 1950. The British media reported 'an unprovoked North Korean attack'. On 27 June the US ordered its troops to give

the ROK forces 'cover and support'. It interposed the US Seventh Fleet between Taiwan and China and made an increase in military aid to the Philippines and the French in Indochina. The Labour Prime Minister Attlee placed Royal Navy ships at the disposal of the US Command and two battalions were sent from Hong Kong to Korea and raised to infantry brigade strength. Twelve thousand British troops were sent to Korea in a multinational force of 16 armies all under US command but acting in the name of the recently formed UN.

Within one and a half months, the KPA had liberated 90 per cent of Korean territory and 92 per cent of the population. Rhee and the US occupation forces had retreated to the far south. As they fled they massacred an estimated 400,000 people. The British Labour cabinet considered prosecuting David Winnington of the *Daily Worker* for reporting this. James Cameron resigned from *Picture Post* when his reports of crucifixions conducted by ROK forces were suppressed. Rene Cutforth's BBC news reports on the atrocities were censored.

On 13 September 1950 the imperialist forces launched a massive counter-assault. By the end of 1950 the US air force grounded its bomber fleet: 'There are no more targets in Korea.' Schools, factories, hospitals, theatres, villages and towns were bombed to dust. Britain's Labour government drafted a resolution giving MacArthur UN authority to cross the 38th parallel. Twelve hours before it was passed in the UN British forces had marched across on 7 October. By mid-November they had reached the

Chinese border.

Together with the KPA the Chinese People's Volunteers counter-attacked. They drove the occupying army south and by the end of December 1950 the whole territory north of the 38th parallel was liberated. Within a year the US had lost more manpower and equipment than they lost on two fronts fought in the Second World War.

MacArthur, who was obsessed with using nuclear weapons, urged their use against China and Korea to minimise US losses and to secure control of the area which he regarded as strategic in the war against international communism. Truman made his first public threat to use nuclear bombs in November 1950. The US Joint Chiefs of Staff in a March 1953 memo stated: 'The efficacy of atomic weapons in achieving greater results at less cost . . . points to the desirability of re-evaluating the policy which now restricts the use of atomic weapons in the Far East.' When the allies opposed the use of nuclear bombs, Eisenhower remarked that if they 'objected . . . we might well ask them to supply three or more divisions needed to drive the communists back in lieu of the use of atomic weapons.' Nuclear weapons were in the end not used primarily because of British and French fears of Soviet nuclear retaliation against their own cities, and also a US fear that its own Far Eastern troop concentrations could be targeted by Soviet nuclear bombs.

An armistice was finally agreed on 12 July 1953. 478,700 napalm and other bombs had been dropped on Pyongyang alone; one bomb for every citizen; 8,000 bombs for every square kilometre; 7.8 million gallons of napalm used for the first time drenched the North in flames. Yet for the first time in over 100 years the US ruling class signed an agreement without victory. Imperialism had been fought to a standstill. Only nuclear blackmail held the revolution at the 38th parallel.

## The Korean revolution and Juche Idea

A distinctive feature of the Korean socialist experience has been the Juche Idea – it combines the masses as the makers of history with national 'self-reliance'. The struggle for national self-reliance has taken the form of an exaggerated nationalism and personality cult. This is under-

standable given Korea's history of invasions and occupations and more specifically its experience during the Sino-Soviet split which began in 1963. Reliant on both Chinese and Soviet economic, military and political support, the Korean government had struggled to find a neutral stance in the bitterly divisive Sino-Soviet clash. It emphasised its independent position and sought support for this in Korea's nationalist legacy.

The Juche Idea led the Korean leadership to avoid integration into the international or Comecon division of labour. This inevitably produced its own economic problems. Socialist construction was made more difficult as a result of the limited size of domestic resources. Inefficient production had to be maintained by state subsidies and there was a shortage of foreign exchange with which to purchase on the international market. These problems were subsequently exacerbated with the end of the fair trading system and support provided by the socialist bloc.

The much remarked personality cult which surrounded Kim Il Sung and his acquisition of the substance of a monarch – his son inheriting his position – reflects the weakness of a revolution which stands isolated in a largely peasant country with only a small working class and laid siege by more powerful outsiders.

Whilst socialists do not approve of or condone such distortions of the socialist idea, nevertheless we recognise that in the current imperialist campaign against Korea, all socialists must stand full square against the US and its allies. Now the US will seek to use the argument over North Korean nuclear potential as a lever with which to open the DPRK to the penetration of capitalist investment. Their first 'offers' will include promises of aid in return for abandoning any nuclear ambitions and introducing a programme of economic reforms. This will be accompanied by inducements to create free trade zones including US and South Korean investment in the North. They seek to lure an element of the Korean Workers Party and government towards collaboration with and personal benefit from multinational capital. In alliance with this faction, they will then attempt to engineer the controlled collapse of the socialist system in Korea.

If the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were to fall, its people will face the same fate as those millions in the one-time socialist bloc. All the progressive achievements of the DPRK will be lost. Its people, like those of Russia and Eastern Europe, will face soaring unemployment, poverty, hunger, homelessness, the rise of crime, the domination of the economy by a greedy mafia in alliance with international capital. They will face the conditions endured by workers in the South who have produced the 'economic miracle': a combination of some of the world's lowest wages, longest hours and unsafe working conditions enforced by a huge army of police and troops. On the day of Kim Il Sung's funeral the South deployed 34,000 armed police on the streets of Seoul to prevent any manifestation of grief or support for the dead North Korean leader.



Riot police prepare to confront pro-North students in Seoul



**T**he start of the world slump coincided with the election of the second minority Labour government in 1929. Completely committed to the interests of banking and finance capital, the government supported the maintenance of the gold standard whilst endorsing the need for a massive rationalisation of British industry. Only as the full import of this programme became apparent in the slump of 1930-31 did any splits appear. The cuts in unemployment benefit and public sector pay proposed by the May committee in the summer of 1931 and accepted until the final moment by the majority of the Labour cabinet proved too much for the TUC General Council. The political representatives of the labour aristocracy split, and a section went over to the National Government.

However, to conclude that therefore the other section somehow returned to the working class would be quite wrong. Elsewhere, we have shown the absolute hostility of the official labour movement to the unemployed, and how the unemployed and their organisation, the National Unemployed Workers' Movement, were constantly attacked and isolated (*Labour: A Party Fit for Imperialism*, pp134-147). However, what is important here is to recognise how the labour aristocracy played a full part in policing the poorer sections of

# The second Labour Government to 1939

In his previous article in this series on the labour aristocracy, ROBERT CLOUGH showed how the organisations of the labour aristocracy – the Labour Party and the trade unions – became institutionalised during the 1920s at a variety of levels, whether in administering state welfare at a local level, or being allowed to participate in governing the British Empire, as Labour was in 1924. However, the thirties were a period of transition, where the British working class was substantially re-structured in the aftermath of the slump of 1929, and where a new labour aristocracy arose, whose interests the Labour Party and trade unions sought to represent.

class organisation was purged of anti-capitalist elements and made safe for economism and spontaneity.' (John Foster: *Imperialism and the Labour Aristocracy* in ed J Skelley: *The General Strike, 1926*).

The result of the 1931 election held a few weeks after MacDonald formed the National Government in alliance with the Tory Party was a disaster for the Labour Party. The number of Labour MPs fell from 288

now decide the outcome of future elections. In this respect, there is a strong parallel between the 'New Realism' of the 1980s and Labour politics in the 1930s.

Changes in the structure of the working class were no less dramatic. Between 1923 and 1938, the number of miners in employment fell by 510,000; in the cotton and woollen industries by 127,000 from 695,000. In contrast, employment in electrical engineering doubled to 111,000 and by nearly the same proportion in the motor vehicle and aircraft sector (from 173,500 to 337,000). Employment in road transport reflected this: up from 227,000 to 384,000. Most dramatic were increases in areas of completely unproductive employment: in the distributing trades (up by 835,000, nearly 50%) and 'Miscellaneous Services', from 495,000 to 856,000. As GDH Cole commented, by 1938 Britain appeared to be turning into 'a nation of shop assistants, clerks, waiters and machine attendants'. (GDH Cole and R Postgate: *The Common People*, p609).

Thus employment increased in unproductive sectors and in luxury production. It was also geographically localised: it was concentrated in the South and East. Thus Welsh steel workers and miners trekked to Swindon and Oxford to seek work in the new automotive industries, Scottish steel workers went to Corby. Further, the employment figures disguise the large amount of short-time working that prevailed in the textile, steel and mining industries during this whole period. Given the further need to support unemployed members of the family, it meant that working class living standards in the so-called 'depressed areas' fell dramatically. This was compounded by the differing levels of unemployment amongst skilled and unskilled workers: in 1931, 30.5 per cent of unskilled workers were out of work compared to 14.4 per cent of skilled workers. However, where workers remained in employment, and where they did not have to support the unemployed, their living standards rose considerably as prices fell.

Thus the British ruling class was able to ride out the slump without serious social disorder. Its financial position cushioned the impact of the slump more than it did in Germany or the US. Its continuing control of the raw material and food sources of the Empire enabled it to take full advantage of the shifting terms of trade. Lastly, through superprofits it could support expanding luxury and unproductive sectors, guaranteeing employment and improving living standards to an increasing middle class and a significant section of the working class. Cole again: 'The main body of the employed workers did not revolt; for the most part it left the workers in the depressed industries to fight their own battles, or gave them but sporadic help'. (p609) And

no wonder Bevin could declare that 'We have been left the . . . responsibility of an Empire and we will not break it up, we will not destroy it.'

## Labour's response

Labour remained indifferent to the unemployed because it recognised that their votes or the votes of the industrial North would not win elections. It was also the fact that the unemployed were mainly unskilled workers. The only time Labour showed any concern for the unemployed was when they fought back, and such concern took the form of complete hostility. Thus Labour opposed all the national hunger marches – in 1930, 1932, 1934, and the two of 1936 which included the apolitical

1918-39). Thus it was not just on unemployment that the Labour Party offered no opposition to the National Government. It opposed action taken by dockers to boycott goods destined for Japan after it invaded Manchuria in 1931. It opposed similar action against Italy five years later. In 1936, it supported the National Government in its refusal to send arms to republican Spain. Throughout this period, it opposed any action at home against the rise of fascism. In defending the refusal of Labour to work with the CPGB in a united front against fascism, Bevin made his position brutally clear: 'if you do not keep down the Communists, you cannot keep down the Fascists' he declared at the 1934 Labour Party Conference. In short, whenever or wherever there was any significant working class action, it was almost always led by the Communist Party, and almost always opposed by the Labour Party.

However, the fruits of this strategy were to prove very meagre for Labour. It made only a weak recovery in the 1935 general election; it won 155 seats, but none of these were in Birmingham, for instance, and only three Labour MPs were returned south of the Midlands outside of London. Recovery of union membership was also limited with the exception of skilled workers. This was hardly surprising: trade unions seemed of limited relevance when living standards were rising without any widespread working class struggle. Not that the trade union movement suffered: its funds grew from £2.05 for each of its 4.15 million members in 1926 to £3.80 per head of a similar number of members in 1936. In 1918, the amount spent on 'working expenses' was six times that spent on the fighting fund; in 1938 it was fourteen times, reflecting the absence of any significant strike activity. The limited struggles that did take place were often led by Communists. As it turned out, it was to take a world war to create an electoral alliance between the labour aristocracy and the mass of the working class on the one hand, and sections of the middle class on the other, sufficient to elect a majority Labour Government.

The 1930s were years of transition as far as the structure of the British working class were concerned. The old export industries on which British industrial wealth had been based – coal, iron, steel, ship-building and textiles – were decimated. The aristocratic sections of the working class employed in these sectors were thrown into destitution. Meanwhile, new manufacturing industries had arisen alongside a burgeoning service sector. A new labour aristocracy was in the making, of skilled workers employed in industries which would only fully develop with the advent of war. Until that time, Labour's attempts to organise these sections and act as their political representative was to have limited success. ■



March of the unemployed crossing Westminster Bridge, London 1933

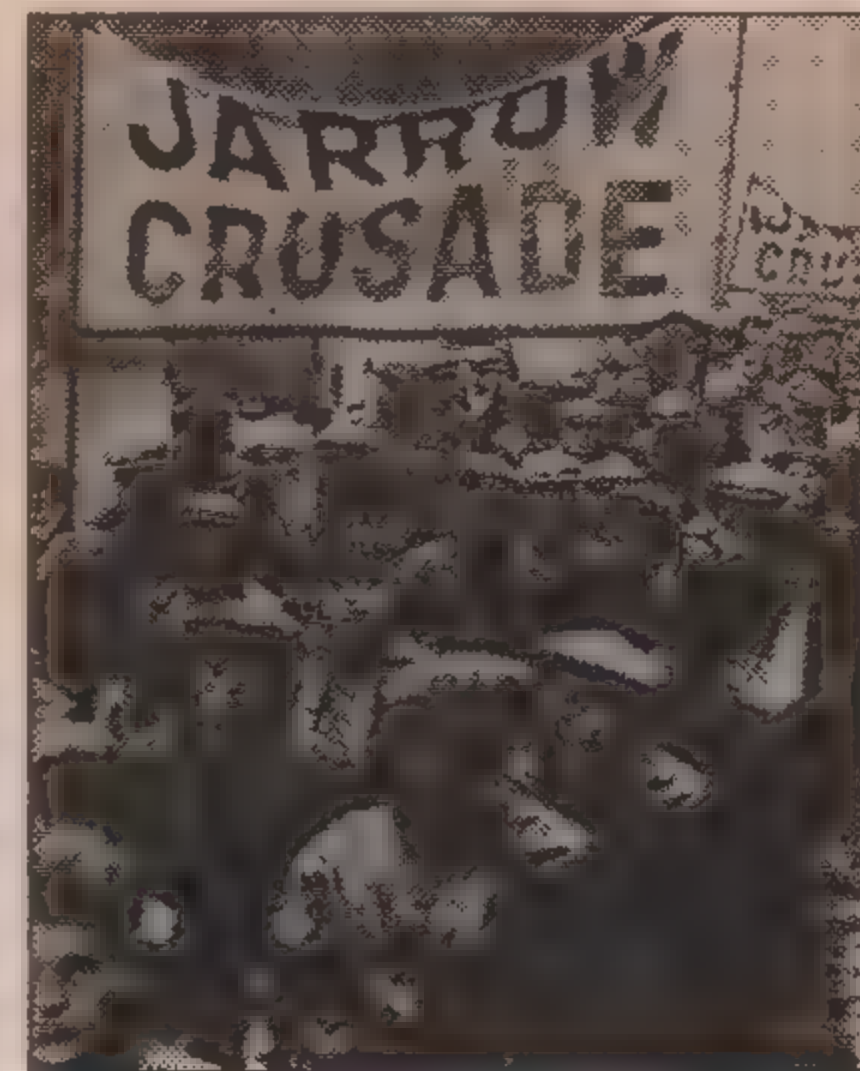
the working class. Much has been written on Poplarism, the short-lived support given by Poplar Labour Party to the unemployed in the immediate post-war period. But it was just that – short-lived, and nowhere else was there ever to be such a degree of unity between all sections of the working class in defence of its poorest sections. Quite the opposite: trade unionists were throughout this period to sit in judgement on the unemployed: 'On the Courts of Referees, on Local Employment Committees, on Boards of Guardians, as members of the Boards of Assessors and later on the Public Assessment Committees, local trade unionists, not the leadership, played a crucial role in the "search for the scrounger".' (K Mann: *The Making of an English Underclass?* p 65).

The unemployed now included hundreds of thousands of workers who had formerly counted amongst the most privileged and 'aristocratic' sections of the working class – engineers, miners and steel workers. Yet to suppose that this meant the concept of the labour aristocracy was now redundant 'would be to miss the whole essence of the labour aristocracy, to see it purely descriptively, in just one of its forms, and ignore its historical role and development: as the active process by which Labour's

to 46, of whom 23 were from mining constituencies. None were returned from the West Midlands, where 25 had been elected in 1929. There were none in the South outside of London. The bulk of the votes it lost were not in the areas most hit by the recession, but in those which were relatively secure – the South and the Midlands where either the new luxury industries were concentrated, or where the expanding service sector predominated. It was the votes of the middle class and the newly affluent skilled workers in these areas who had defected to the National Government and given it a landslide majority. And it was these votes which Labour would have to win back if it was to have any hope of forming another Government.

## The changing structure of the working class

This then was the driving force behind the political standpoint of the Labour Party and the trade unions throughout the 1930s: to win the allegiance of relatively affluent, relatively secure sections of the working class living in the Midlands and the South, working in industries such as chemicals, electrical goods and the rapidly expanding vehicle industry. It would be these votes which would



The Jarrow march of 1936

Jarrow march. It did not even debate the problem of the distressed areas of the North, Scotland and South Wales until 1936. In so far as there were any mass struggles against cuts in unemployment benefit, they were led by the unemployed themselves, especially in 1931-32 and 1935.

One consequence of the 1931 debacle was that the Labour Party and the trade union leadership not only maintained but consolidated their reactionary alliance – the essence of social democracy – against the mass of the working class. Key to this was the new National Joint Council initiated by Citrine and Bevin which was set up in January 1932. Rather than meet quarterly as it had done hitherto, it now met monthly, on the day before the Labour Party NEC. With seven TUC General Council members and six from the Labour Party, the Joint Council virtually handed control of Labour policy to the General Council and therefore to Bevin and Citrine.

Saville says of the Labour leaders in the 1930s that 'they gave no hope or inspiration to their own supporters, and were tough, uncompromising and energetic only when their own positions of power were threatened, hence the political and industrial expulsion and excommunications' (ed Saville *Essays in Labour History*



# Imprisoning the poor

The idea of the debtors' prison conjures up strong images from the past – men and women incarcerated in Newgate and other squalid pre-Victorian prisons for no crime other than their inability to pay money they owed. Now, as the welfare state goes under the butcher's knife, the possibility of imprisonment for debt is becoming once again a part of everyday reality faced by a growing number of working class people. NICKI JAMESON reports.

**T**he majority of today's imprisoned debtors have failed to pay court-imposed fines. During the boom years of the 1980s imprisonment for fine default gradually decreased, but since 1989 it has increased by leaps and bounds and in 1993 22,754 men and women were gaoled in England and Wales for non-payment of fines and civil debts.

Twenty nine per cent of those gaoled for default in 1993 had been fined for motoring offences, 17 per cent for theft and 23 per cent for a range of minor offences, most of which are not in themselves imprisonable and which include loitering, prostitution and drunkenness. 845 people (more than a third of whom were women, although women only constitute five per cent of the total of imprisoned defaulters) were gaoled for not having a TV licence, and 504 were imprisoned for non-payment of the poll tax.

In a recent study the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO) looked at a sample of 35 typical case studies and found that the amounts of the fines defaulted on ranged from £20 to £1,478 and the sentences imposed from seven to 90 days. To someone in regular, reasonably-paid employment the sums of

## MANCHESTER

**B has a four year old daughter. She was gaoled for poll tax debts of £400. She had no previous convictions. She was held overnight in police cells and sent straight to gaol on a warrant. There was no court hearing and no child-care arrangements – 70 DAYS.**

money appear tiny; to a person living on state benefit they are crippling. From 1992-3 there was a brief flirtation with the imposition of fines supposedly based on the ability to pay, but the main effect of this was that more people from the lowest income brackets were fined overall.

To gaol for non-payment a court must be satisfied that the person has either wilfully refused to pay the debt or is guilty of 'culpable neglect' in his or her financial affairs. The first criterion applies to those (such as politically motivated non-poll tax payers, or prostitutes who deliberately opt for immediate custody rather than pay continual fines) who openly state in court that they are not prepared to pay. All other imprisoned defaulters,

the vast majority, fall foul of the second criterion: they are not the won't pays, they are the can't pays.

They can't pay, in most cases, because they already have other insurmountable financial problems: other debts, such as rent, lighting, heating; other commitments, such as food and clothing for themselves and their children. If, after a means inquiry, the court considers the person has spent money on other priorities, rather than on the fine, this can be judged as culpable neglect.

Approximately 80 per cent of fine defaulters are unemployed (90 per cent in Scotland). In theory magistrates' courts can order the deduction

## SOUTH MIDLANDS

**HH is 21, cohabits and is the father of a baby. He is sometimes self-employed and was fined £350 for road traffic offences. At the time of his court appearance he had paid off a third of the debt. He has other debts including rent. He offered to pay £2 per week but this was refused. He has no previous criminal record – 14 DAYS.**

of fine instalments from benefit but they rarely do so because most defaulters are already having their benefit deducted for arrears in rent and bills. So, on any day of the year, nearly 500 men and women are in prison in England and Wales simply because they cannot manage to live on state benefit.

The upkeep of those 500 is an expensive business. In 1993 a place in a local prison cost, on average, £566 per week. The cost of imprisoning defaulters that year was £14.5 million, excluding court and administration costs.

So why does the state carry on with this system? Why not just write off the fines of the very poor and save the costs of collection, trial and imprisonment? The answer is simple and the government knows it: end the consistent persecution of the very poor and others among their number may also get the impression that they do not owe any debt to the society which keeps them in penury; remove or lessen the threat of imprisonment and those now 'prioritising' fine payment over rent, food etc, might change their priorities. This would matter to the government not only in political but in purely financial terms as well: the £14.5 million cost of imprisoning defaulters looks paltry when compared to the £251,176,000 state income from the fines and fixed penalties which were paid in 1993-4. Some of this undoubtedly comes from companies and rich individuals but a disproportionate amount is levied from the poorest members of the working class. And this figure does not, of course, include local authority income from the poll tax, the collection of which also rests largely on coercion.

There are two ways to keep the poor 'under control' and ensure they

do not rebel: co-option and repression. The first method persuades the working class it has an interest in supporting the system while the second simply punishes anyone who transgresses against it. The appropriate balance between the two forms the basis of all debates between different sections of the ruling class on 'law and order'. NAPO, at the end of its well-researched study, proposes the former course, advocating a change in the law to remove 'culpable neglect' as a criterion for imprisonment and suggesting that defaulters be dealt with instead by 'good practice involving debt counselling, revised payment, the remitting of outstanding amounts or money supervision orders' as if any of these measures are capable of producing money where none actually exists. The current government has set itself firmly on the other course: it has concluded that in this period no crumbs of profits are available with which to buy the compliance of the poorer sections of the working class, so they will be kicked, battered and imprisoned into submission instead.

## POWs' Birthdays

**Stephen Nordone** 758663, HMP Frankland, Finchale Avenue, Braxside, Durham DH1 5YD 2 August

**Paul Kavanagh** L31888, HMP Full Sutton, York, YO4 1PS 12 August

**Vincent Donnelly** 274064, HMP Whitemoor, Longhill Road, March, Cambridge, PE15 0PR 25 September

## INSIDE NEWS

### Prison activist recaptured

John Bowden, who escaped from custody in December 1992 after serving 12 years out of a life sentence, was arrested by Scottish police on 23 June and is now in HMP Perth awaiting trial in September. After that trial (probably immediately but possibly following the completion of any sentence handed out) he anticipates being returned into the English prison system.



John Bowden

As FRFI readers will know, during his previous period of imprisonment John distinguished himself as an activist in the struggle for prisoners' rights. He was involved with all forms of protest, from the taking hostage of a Parkhurst governor in 1983 to highlight oppression in that gaol, to the organisation of a prestigious series of forums on prison reform in Long Lartin between 1989 and 1991, at which a wide range of outside guests (including representatives of FRFI) discussed and debated the

topics with serving prisoners. John has contributed regularly and outstandingly to the FRFI 'Prisoners' Fightback' page for over 10 years, a commitment he continued to meet while on the run.

In December 1992 John wrote to *The Guardian* that one reason for his escape was to protest against the use of the life sentence which, he said, had nothing to do with rehabilitation and 'everything to do with the desire to crush and incapacitate the lifer – physically, spiritually and mentally'.

Write to John Bowden 1272/94 HMP Perth, 3 Edinburgh Road, Perth, Scotland.

### Death in HMP New Hall

On 5 July Michelle Pearson, aged 23 and the mother of two small children, was found hanged in New Hall women's prison. She was serving nine months for driving offences and ABH and had just returned from home leave.

The campaigning group Prison Watch immediately issued a statement, saying: 'This death...raises questions about the necessity and advisability of imprisoning mothers of young children...Such sentences, usually imposed by male judges, seriously damage families and cause extreme distress to mothers and children at a crucial time in their lives. In Michelle's case we suspect the feeling of separation was too intense and has led to her children being permanently deprived of a mother.'

### Violent transfers from Long Lartin

On 21 June 11 long-term prisoners were moved, violently and without warning, from Long Lartin to other dispersal gaols. FRFI received this account from Alan Byrne:

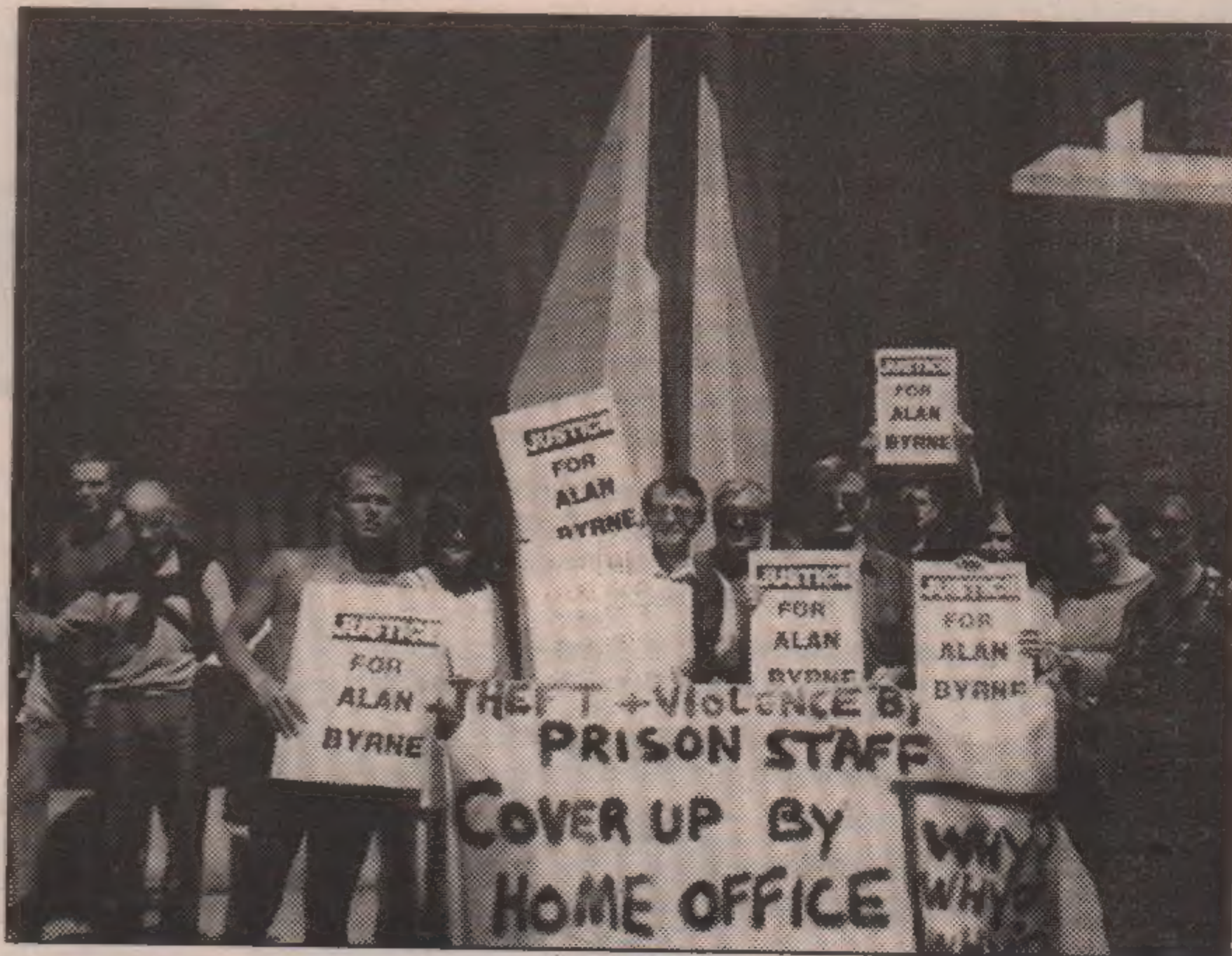
'At about 7am I was aware of a Prison Officer at my door... Before I even had an opportunity to agree to go with him to the segregation unit three or four other screws in riot gear attacked me without provocation and with such force (I was hit on the head with a shield) that I collapsed on the floor. My hands were shoved behind my back and my thumbs pressed against my wrists, causing me to shout out in agony. This only seemed to make my attackers intensify their grip. Another screw deliberately kicked over my chamber pot, causing the contents to go all over my face. The two screws holding my thumbs back then rubbed my face fully in the contents of the pot. I was dragged to the Segregation Unit and, en route, kicked in the testicles and punched around the body. I was continuously abused and... threats were made to kill me.'

Alan Byrne, Gary Turner and Eugene Vatsaloo were moved to Parkhurst; other prisoners to Full Sutton and elsewhere. No disciplinary charges were brought against them and they were given no reason for the move although some were later told they had been under suspicion of dealing heroin, an allegation which all concerned maintain is completely spurious and for which there was no evidence of any description.

Several thousand pounds worth of prisoners' property was either irreparably damaged or stolen by the prison officers who presided over the transfer process. This was subsequently reported to the local police and the Long Lartin Board of Visitors but the prisoners received no joy from either quarter. The remains of Alan's property arrived at Parkhurst about five days after he did, smashed, torn and with cooking oil poured over his books.

### Alan Byrne on hunger strike

And the story does not end there: on 8 July, again with no warning, Alan was moved to Full Sutton. On arrival he immediately went on hunger strike, demanding a return to Parkhurst where, after two weeks getting over his shock arrival, he had just begun to feel settled. His sister Eileen told FRFI:



Friends and supporters of Alan Byrne demonstrate outside the Home Office

'He can't go through this again. In ten years Alan has already had more than 30 moves but he'd been at Long Lartin for two and a half years before this episode... And we, his family, are suffering too, all the time this goes on.'

The 'Friends of Alan Byrne' have been supporting Alan with a vigorous campaign including a picket of the Home Office, supported by the RCG and attended by 40 people.

### Strangeways 'jury-nobbling' verdict

To the shock of all present, a Manchester jury found David Bowen guilty of conspiring to pervert the course of justice by attempting to influence the jury in the first Strangeways riot trial. Paul Taylor had already pleaded guilty to the same charge. Both were sentenced to three years further imprisonment. David is appealing.

Nicki Jameson



## COMMUNIST FORUMS

A new series of public discussions of communist politics introduced by members of the *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* Editorial Board.

### LONDON

11 September  
**Fight Fascism – Build Socialism!**  
Maxine Williams

9 October  
**Why the Labour Movement won't Fight**  
Robert Clough

13 November  
**Capitalist Law and Order: Taking Liberties**  
Carol Brickley

11 December  
**Their Profit – Our Loss: The Multinationals against Humanity**

All the forums are at 2pm on Sunday afternoon.  
Venue: Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1  
(nearest tube Holborn)

Entrance £1 waged, 50p unwaged. Assistance with childcare available on application.

### MANCHESTER

Wednesday 14 September 7.30pm  
**Fight Fascism – Build Socialism**

Friends Meeting House, Mount Street, Manchester

For further information: Forums, c/o FRFI, BCM Box 5909, London WC1N 3XX.

### City AA AGM

Saturday 3 September  
The London Welsh Centre, Gray's Inn Rd  
Tel: 071 837 6050 for details.

## FRFI FUND APPEAL – £1,088 NEEDED! LONG HOT SUMMER SEND CONTRIBUTIONS NOW!

This issue of *Fight Racism! Fight Imperialism!* has many reports from comrades who are actively involved in the struggle. We want our paper to represent every and any authentic voice of the working class struggle in Britain, because we want to rekindle confidence and a new fighting movement.

FRFI too has a struggle, the struggle to continue publishing at a price that working class people, whether employed or not, can afford.

We need to raise extra funds every issue to keep the price of FRFI at its current level. Everything should be done to ensure that our paper reaches as many people as possible, and that means keeping FRFI at 50p if we can. So every bit of money that you send us helps spread communist politics and to give the voices of class struggle a hearing.

The special FRFI Fund launched in the last issue has reached £912. A fair start, comrades, but not good enough. To keep within our budget of £1,000 an issue, we must raise an extra £88 this time round. So as soon as you read this, get an envelope and a stamp, and send in a donation.

Special thanks go to EH, MD, RW, JOD, WB, GT, AR, A and PT, RL, AK, AG, CCS, GOC, RP, JO, WW, WH, RCG branches and especially the Blackburn car boot sale.

If you really can't spare any money at all, then how about organising a collection from the people you know who read FRFI and would welcome the chance to help?

To help FRFI I have decided to: enclose a donation (payable to Larkin Publications) of £ \_\_\_\_\_ request a bank Standing Order form for regular contributions £ \_\_\_\_\_

order \_\_\_\_\_ extra copies of FRFI to distribute (sale or return)

take out subscriptions for myself \_\_\_\_\_ and friends \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Tel: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: FRFI Fund Appeal, Larkin Publications, BCM 5909, London WC1N 3XX

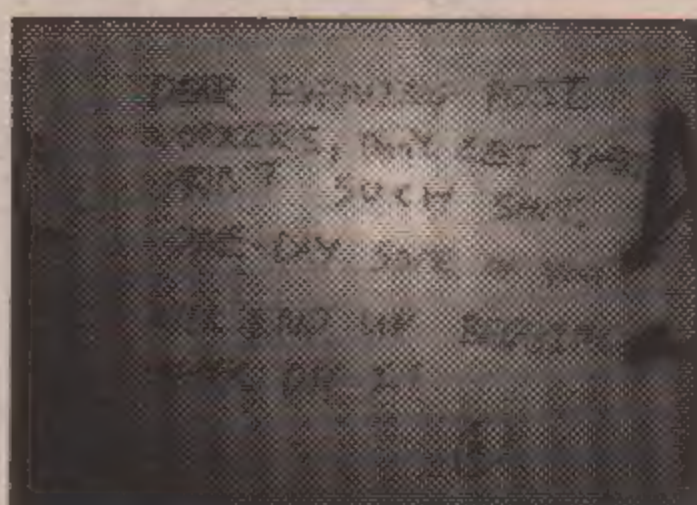
### INTRODUCTORY SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

Special Introductory Subscription. At £1 for 3 issues\*, this offer to new readers means that in effect you get FRFI for the cost of postage only. Make use of this offer to introduce FRFI to your friends and comrades.

\*Applies only to Britain

## LETTERS

write to FRFI BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX



Outside the very plush headquarters of the local rags is a civilian underpass, and the photo (above) is of some very relevant graffiti, probably put there by one of the beggars. Whether it has pricked the conscience of any of the hacks employed by the rags is very doubtful.

PETE JORDAN  
Bristol

### Blame the Tories, not the beggars

When Major used the occasion of a speech to Tory Party members in Bristol to launch an attack on the numerous people reduced to begging in the streets of Bristol (as a result of Tory policy), the two local rags, *Western Daily Press* and *Bristol Evening Post* published editorials giving Major full support. In the event they misjudged the common sense of the working people of Bristol; most of the letters the local rags received were sympathetic to those reduced to begging and most clearly laid the blame on Tory policies.

### Solidarity with Women Prisoners Prisoners' Justice Day

Wednesday 10 August 4.30pm  
Holloway Prison, Parkhurst Road, London N1. Organised by Anarchist Black Cross, supported by RCG, Southall Black Sisters

### March for British Withdrawal from Ireland

Saturday 13 August  
Assemble Kennington Park (near Oval tube) 12 noon to demonstrate for British withdrawal from Ireland and the right of Irish people to self determination.

### In defence of Schindler's List

Colette Lévy's review of Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (FRFI 119) must be challenged. I found it hard to decide how much it was intended as a serious critique of the film and the issues it raises, or rather to simply dismiss it outright by means of denigration and innuendo.

Unless you are an ultra-left purist, how can one not welcome a film that essentially depicts the barbarity of fascism and shows human resistance to it? Given that racism and antisemitism are rampant in Europe and in Italy fascists are in power, shouldn't the making of this film be applauded?

The review contains many factual inaccuracies (for example, German political prisoners were not detained since 1933 at Auschwitz – it didn't exist as an operative concentration camp until May 1940); yet it is the cynical way in which facts are distorted that undermines its attempt to assess the film and open up political discussion on the Holocaust and responses to it.

An agenda is created that would be impossible for any film maker to address – Spielberg is supposed to show the reasons for the rise of Nazism, the range of resistance at Auschwitz and other death camps, the contribution of the Soviet people in defeating fascism and his support for the Palestinians! All laudable objectives, but the point completely missed is that Spielberg set out to make a film about Oskar Schindler. It is true that the film doesn't address the causes of the genocidal violence – is it really beyond people to go and read books and study this period for themselves?

According to Colette Lévy, 'we see a crowd of servile workers, totally at the mercy of Schindler.' What I, and

fraught with difficulties and often nearly impossible. Yet in every camp and ghetto there were uprisings. Do we today only recognise and remember those whose resistance was based on physical armed action? As the writer Yuri Suhl has commented: 'Attempting to stay alive was ... resistance. Escaping, hiding or giving birth to a child in the ghetto was resistance. Praying, singing or studying ... was resistance.'

Schindler, by employing 1,200 Jews at his factory and pretending they were essential to the Nazi war effort, protected them from deportation and certain death. Your review not only works to obscure this fact, but most offensively suggests, either deliberately or through careless

Thomas Kenneally's book will know, is that after the war Schindler was cared for in Munich by survivors, the so-called *Schindlerjuden*. An international Jewish relief organisation, to whom Schindler had made reports during the war, provided the financial support for Schindler to sail (undisguised) to Argentina where he bought a farm. He was accompanied by a number of families of *Schindlerjuden*.

When Schindler later returned to Germany, 'he was hissed on the streets of Frankfurt, stones were thrown, a group of workmen jeered him and called out that he ought to have been burned with the Jews. In 1963 he punched a factory worker who'd called him a Jew-kisser...' (*Schindler's Ark*)

Schindler is remembered by the people he helped as a hero. Spielberg hardly portrays him as a 'superman' – it is Schindler's ordinariness, his human failings, that resonate. And incidentally, hero-worshipping is scarcely an act of 'imperialist cultural behaviour'. Would it be churlish to remark on the 'personality cults' that existed in many socialist countries?

*Schindler's List* is in many ways flawed as a film. There are serious omissions and the 'Hollywoodisation' of this period of recent history can be criticised. Yet despite this, it is a film for discussion with young people, who are vulnerable to revisionist propaganda that the Holocaust didn't happen; it can open up opportunities for learning both about the Nazi period and racism, antisemitism and genocide today.

BILL HUGHES  
London



I'm sure many others, saw were Jewish communities totally at the mercy of the Nazis who murdered, as we know, at will. We saw the process of terror and ghettoisation, the screaming of orders, the whips and ferocious dogs, the arbitrary shootings and hangings. Resistance to this murder and barbarism was

editing, that Schindler was really, no different from the Nazi murderers: 'The truth remains that at the end of the Second World War Schindler and his wife were disguised and ... flown to Argentina where, incidentally, all Nazi criminals on the run were sent into exile.'

The truth, as anyone who has read

### Still harpin' on Stalin

The letter which appeared in FRFI 119 (June/July) from E Rule and I Stoley surely misses the main point on the Stalin question.

In my view, and the view of many other comrades, the central question is not about whether Stalin ever erred, and if so how long did he

those are all the mistakes FRFI think Stalin ever made, I can live with the situation?

Speak now or for ever hold your peace.

IVOR KENNA  
London

### Patriarchy and oppression

I was surprised to read in the review of *Looks Like Freedom* (FRFI 119) that Cat Wiener doesn't see love as redemption in this capitalist culture which tries to deny people that right. And also to say that physical exclusivity is a myth of romantic love without qualification is a little sad. Within the context of capitalism relationships are only necessary for the production of future workers. As individuals we are only necessary to produce profit and to consume commodities. The historical development of capitalism has turned people into commodities, to be bought and sold. This brutalisation, I believe, has ultimately led us to a state where people have become so emotionally illiterate that in imperialist nations especially the populations have become slaves both mentally and physically.

The main foundation for this is patriarchy. I don't hear many on the left talk about it and yet we know the key to control is divide and rule. What ultimate division is there but between women and men? Patriarchy fosters and develops this division. It brutalises young boys to become men ie denying and suppressing their right to emotional expression. Girls too have their indoctrination and conditioning but they are better placed to express their oppression than me. The emotional deprivation that men experience is, I believe, the key reason for the acceptance and participation in the oppressive apparatus which condemns men to perpetuate their own enslavement and consequently women's too. As carers of children, both women and men participate in the conditioning which sustains patriarchy. The

involvement of women in the process results in ultimately men distrusting women, which leads to the easy assimilation of sexism. Women under capitalism become objects and a sexual commodity to be used. Men accept this as normal and even enjoy their power to oppress women, denying their own oppression under a system which serves no one except those in power.

A vision of a new society and culture that communists have will be a hollow victory without the destruction of patriarchy – women and men will have no equality and hence no real freedom to have deep, loving, trusting and physically exclusive relationships which will be the goal of emotionally developed equals (both gay and straight). In a compassionate and supportive future society we can pursue the really important things in life – devoid of the trivia of capitalist culture.

Surely as part of the general propaganda and agenda of communists the exposure of patriarchy should be an issue, or do we have to wait for the revolution? Men suffer under patriarchy too and the future of humankind not only rests upon the social revolution but on our own personal revolutions too. The prerequisite for a truly free society for women and men is one where honesty, trust and respect will be the norm and it will be a world without capitalism or patriarchy.

SIMON CLARKE  
North London

### Anarchism: tilting at windmills?

The major difference between anarchism and socialism is one of principle. For anarchists the liberation of the individual is the key to the liberation of society; for communists the reverse is the case. In this anarchism is distinct from the other two trends in socialism ie Marxism and Reformism, and though it may be relatively small in followers, unlike Reformism, it is not in decay and gradually losing all semblance of socialism.

At present our real enemy has to be Reformism and in that we can agree with the anarchists. It is only after the defeat of Reformism that the difference with anarchists will really come to the fore. We both agree on the reactionary nature of the Labour Movement, on the need to destroy the present state machine, including police, courts, asylums, prisons etc; both are revolutionary and believe in 'community fight-back' rather than 'trade union struggle' and tend to have a syndicalist view of the role of trade unions rather than as just wage-bargaining societies.

There is a tendency for anarchists to become utopians, believing that anything is possible at the present time. This inevitably leads to disagreements on the role of the dictatorship of the proletariat and national liberation movements. One problem highlighted in the letter by Dave Coull (FRFI 119) is a tendency amongst many anarchists not necessarily to 'misunderstand' Leninism but to rely on hearsay and selective quotes from Marxists. As Stalin concluded in *Anarchism versus Socialism*, 'they are fighting not Marx and Engels but windmills, as Don Quixote of blessed memory did in his day ...'

But I think we are at a stage at present where we cannot afford to make unnecessary enemies and should set out a minimum programme within which we can work with various groups, be they anarchists, environmentalists or even liberation theologians. The RCG in its campaigning work has always worked with anarchists, people from religious faiths and even decent people in the labour and trade union movement. I believe that this is a good formula for the future. In 1917 many anarchists came from all over the world to visit Lenin and, although they opposed the Bolsheviks, they saw the revolution as a step in the right direction. Lenin was willing to work with them and the Russian anarchists so long as they didn't become actual counter-revolutionaries.

JOHN WALKER  
Manchester



persist in his mistakes? Such an approach amounts to the deification of political leaders, more suitable to the times of the pharaohs than to modern politics. The important question today for communists is, do they go along with the bourgeoisie's anti-Stalin campaign or not?

The bourgeois/Trotskyist and also revisionist hate-Stalin campaign serves to undermine the political influence of Marxism-Leninism in the working class. For this reason we say that those who take part in this campaign become the tools of imperialism.

TONY  
London

I note from Andy Higginbottom's reply to E Rule and I Stoley that Stalin made mistakes, subsequently acknowledged by him, back in 1905-1907 (FRFI 119).

Do you know, comrades, that if



## Imperialism, world trade and working class resistance

Eddie Abraham's analysis of the Uruguay Round of GATT (FRFI 119) packs much useful information and comment into a relatively short article. However his analysis would have been more revealing if he had started from a different proposition.

The Uruguay Round was about much wider issues than market access questions that have dominated all previous rounds of GATT. GATT chairman Peter Sutherland, summed it up when he said: "... it will complete the transition from a trading system which largely restricted itself to policies at the border to one which also covers most aspects of domestic policy-making affecting international competition in goods and services, as well as investment."

This extension of the GATT area of operation into domestic policy making should be our starting point and in this respect the new issues of the Uruguay Round are crucial. We need to see these new issues - Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMs), Trade Related Intellectual Property (TRIPs) and services - as an interrelated unit and set the Uruguay Round itself in a wider context. Take TRIMs. There has been a long history of negotiation about the activities of transnational corporations (TNCs) in the neo-colonies. The TNCs sought the freedom to use monopoly restrictive business practices, for example transfer pricing, to maximise their profits at the expense of the peoples of the neo-colonies. The neo-

the TNC monopoly practices were excluded from discussion. As the South Commission said 'There is no justification for GATT limiting ... the negotiative scope of governments of developing countries, while leaving untouched the policies of transnational corporations in the vital areas where they impinge on the development prospects of the host countries. This would make GATT the champion of those corporations at the expense of the South.' This is precisely what happened.

A similar story can be told for TRIPs and services. In the case of TRIPs the imperialist powers - US, Canada, EU, Japan - have achieved a change in global property rights. Such drastic changes have always in the past been brought about by revolution (or counterrevolution) and war. Furthermore, if we look carefully at the Uruguay negotiations, we can see that the main problems for the imperialist negotiators, which were in agriculture and services, were due to inter-imperialist rivalries. The opposition from the neo-colonies was divided and finally routed. This drastic extension of the power of imperialism in GATT must, of course, be understood as a result of the new balance of global power following the collapse of the USSR.

What does imperialism's victory through GATT and its devastating consequence for most peoples of the world mean for our political theory and practice?

The agenda of imperialism is clear: GATT is to be replaced by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), as Eddie describes. The WTO will have greater powers of disciplining states which do not accede to the dominant

government procurement to the full power of the TNCs will tie in closely with other new issues.

What does this analysis imply? Eddie correctly talks about the enormous suffering to be inflicted on the working class of the imperialist countries as well as the greater suffering for the people of the neo-colonies. However, the current power of imperialism, along with the integrated global character of the imperialist political-economic system, raises fundamental questions. If imperialism has the power to impose the Uruguay settlement, in spite of internal contradictions, is it still possible to consider national liberation to be a viable proposition as opposed to mere aspiration or hollow rhetoric? The question has become particularly pressing with the developments in South Africa, Palestine and Ireland.

JOHN  
North London

*We are wrongly chided for not taking as our starting point GATT's 'extension ... into domestic policy'. GATT, we noted, was a manifestation of new colonialism which 'forced Third World countries to bring down ... barriers to multinational domination'. 'Entire nations' will come 'under the effective command of foreign multinationals'. We didn't write about trade alone, but about domestic policy and the destruction of independent domestic development.*

*GATT does represent a victory for imperialism, but not the emergence of a 'super-imperialism'. It doesn't follow that national liberation is 'mere aspiration' or 'hollow rhetoric'. This conclusion is drawn by those who overlook the depth and severity of inter-imperialist rivalries and the effects these will have on world politics. GATT, the WTO, the IMF, etc are not homogeneous, invincible super-imperialist institutions. The USA, Europe, Japan were jointly able to impose their will on the Third World. But internal divisions among them burst forth immediately GATT was signed. Intensified inter-imperialist divisions will hinder their cooperative abilities to dominate the Third World permanently.*

*So long as nations are subjected to colonial style domination, national resistance is inevitable. Throughout the Third World, working class and democratic forces are fighting GATT. So in fact are reactionary elements such as the fundamentalists in India. As inter-imperialist rivalries intensify, working class forces, both in the Third World and in the imperialist countries, opposed to GATT and the multi-nationals will have greater space to operate in. Chances of working class victory in any particular country will be increased by the success we communists have in the imperialist countries in building a working class movement capable of uniting with the working class internationally.*

Eddie Abrahams



colonial governments meanwhile sought out TNC investment and technology transfer, but also attempted to legislate against their monopoly practices. (This conflict of interests was addressed, for example, in the Havana Charter, the predecessor of GATT.) In the GATT negotiations the neo-colonial representatives, led by India and Brazil, initially opposed the US initiative for the new round and later complained that their investment legislation was being attacked while

members. Far from being 'an impartial global policeman', the US will, according to US Trade Representative Mickey Kantor, continue to use this legislation to force the opening of markets and domestic policy changes. The WTO will also work closely with the IMF and World Bank. Already the imperialist negotiators are pushing for government procurement policies, both national and regional, to be included in the WTO legislation. The WTO measures on opening up

## Calling the RCG to account

I note that the RCG (FRFI 119, p15) is attempting to initiate a debate on Trotsky and Stalin. Considering that the RCG is a grouping which originally emanated from a Trotskyist background, the lack of a comprehensive critique of Trotsky and Trotskyism is something of a lacuna in the organisation's political perspectives. The RCG has broken from Trotskyism without ever giving a proper historical account, a balance sheet if you will, of its decision. (By a proper historical account, I mean something comprehensive rather than, say, the 2-page article by Kitson in FRFI 97, September/November 1990, interesting though it was). For Marxist-Leninists such a vacuum is theoretically unacceptable.

In FRFI 87, June 1989, Maxine Williams stated: '... The RCG cannot go on for the whole of its existence without taking a well worked-out position on the Soviet Union. It still does not have one and therefore, in my view, succumbs to unhealthy and impressionistic pressures whenever it

is forced to comment...'

As we know, the RCG still has no comprehensive and systematic position on the former USSR. It is true that *The Legacy of the Bolshevik Revolution* touches upon aspects of the work that needs doing, but the economic dimension is relatively absent. The nature of the former Soviet Union is so closely tied up with the Trotsky/Stalin debate that it should no longer be ignored.

On the question of Stalin and the regime headed by him, it is essential to pay serious attention to the methodological point which John Archibald Getty makes in his *Origins of the Great Purges: The Soviet Communist Party Reconsidered, 1933-1938* (Cambridge University Press 1985). The Western understanding of Stalin/ism has emanated from a very narrow range of sources, emigrés, defectors and anecdotal accounts all hostile to the Soviet regime (pp4-5). The other main source of information on the Soviet regime, Trotsky, is equally hostile to its existence (p214).

TED TALBOT  
Nottingham

toilets as well as the men's. I could go on and on but I would get carried away and start carrying the furniture out to erect barricades.

Young people are leaving school almost totally illiterate but are given to understand that if they read the *Sun* they are superior to everyone else in the world - which makes them ready-made BNP material. People are being refused medical treatment

## Telling it how it is

Keep up the good work and I believe that some day, somewhere, some how, the circle will be broken and an end will be put to the downward spiral. It is very difficult to see how but I have to believe it will happen. Everything looks so hopeless now that the trade unions have totally rejected any notion of defending



anything. Look around and what do we see, UNISON leadership get away with saying that any action in defence of the NHS is playing into the hands of the government, so we are supposed to sit back and watch hospital after hospital closing down and do nothing but petition the very savages who are tearing the country apart in order to line their own pockets.

Look at transport: hours have been increased for workers, wages have been cut, routes deregulated, pensions plundered, but what of it? Uncle Tom Morris had a victory because London buses will remain red! This is what they are hailing as victory these days. Another group of workers has had a grading system which served them well for decades totally dismantled - but they won a victory because there will now be condom dispensers in the women's

because they have reached an age when they most need it. Meanwhile trade unionists can congratulate themselves on the fact that companies move out of other EC countries and relocate here because wages are so low and conditions more appropriate to the 19th century.

I never thought I would see the day where the Labour Party, the trades unions and the Tories would form an alliance against the working class and I'm sorry I did. I am convinced that new institutions will have to be created because if we fail to educate the masses that downward spiral is set to continue. That is why I say FRFI is important, because it tells it how it is, and long may it continue to do so.

M MURTAGH  
Surrey



Surinder Bassi during the Burnsall strike

years earlier, Surinder and all the other women of the Burnsall's strike are the unsung working class heroes of our time. They light the way for future struggles; their message to the cringing, opportunist 'labour movement' of today, as well as to the slave-driving sweatshop bosses, is, as expressed in words of a song written for the strike:

'I'm tired of bowing down.  
The time has come to rise up and stand tall

From today, I vow I'll have no fear.'

There will be a memorial meeting for Surinder in London on 18 August. For details of time and venue phone: 071 713 7907.

# Standing tall against exploitation

## Obituary for Surinder Kaur Bassi

Surinder Kaur Bassi has died aged 44. The RCG salutes and pays tribute to a woman who stood virtually every day for over a year on the picket line outside Burnsall's factory in Smethwick. Surinder came to Britain from the Punjab with her husband and, after the birth of her two children, worked for many years in the textile industry in Bradford. She then worked as a vegetable and fruit packer before moving to Smethwick and Burnsall's metal-

finishing factory.

When the workers at Burnsall's united to oppose the appalling oppressive conditions they were forced to work under, Surinder became a leading figure in the struggle. She and her comrades struck for equal pay for men and women, decent health and safety provisions, an end to compulsory overtime and for trade union recognition. They fought for basic human rights and dignity, they fought hard for their union, and inevitably they found themselves fighting against the union.

On 30 June Birmingham GMB unilaterally declared the strike at Burnsall's over, and unceremoniously abandoned the 19 remaining strikers, the

majority of whom were Asian women. The GMB never wanted the victory Surinder and her sisters were fighting for. A strike led by Asian women against sweatshop conditions begged too many questions about racism and sexism in the labour movement. British trade unions have no interest in the struggles of the most oppressed sections of workers. The GMB leadership's chief concern throughout the strike was preserving its link with the Labour Party - a party which itself did nothing to support the strikers. Clare Short MP, whose constituency backs onto Burnsall's, did not visit the picket line once.

Like those at Grunwicks 20

## CHOOSE THE

# RCG

If you believe that the treachery of the opportunist British Labour and trade union movement must be challenged, then there is no alternative - Join the RCG!

**I would like to join/ receive more information about the RCG**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

Tel \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBSCRIBE to the best anti-imperialist newspaper in Britain FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!**

Subscription rates:

- Britain (inc N. Ireland): £4.50 for 6 issues, £8 for 12 issues
- EC/Europe air printed paper rate: £6 for six issues, £11 for 12 issues
- EC/Europe air letter rate: £7 for 6 issues, £13 for 12 issues
- Africa, America, Middle East, South Asia air printed paper rate: £7.50 for 6 issues, £14 for 12 issues
- East Asia, Australasia, Pacific air printed paper rate: £8.50 for 6 issues, £16 for 12 issues
- Libraries and institutions: double individual rates

Make cheques/POs payable to Larkin Publications.

Add £5 for foreign currency cheques. Overseas rates given are for printed paper reduced rate and are unsealed. If you wish your mail to be sealed please let us know and we will inform you of the extra cost. I wish to subscribe to FRFI beginning with issue

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

I enclose payment of £ \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_ issues at rate \_\_\_\_\_

Return this form to: FRFI, BCM Box 5909 London WC1N 3XX

## FRFI READERS & SUPPORTERS GROUPS

### NORTH LONDON

Monday 15 August 7.30pm

**A World Still to Win - the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels**

Monday 5 September 7.30pm

**Korea: Imperialism Lays Siege**

Both at the Neighbourhood Centre, Greenland Street, London NW1 (2 minutes from Camden Town tube). All welcome.

### SOUTH LONDON

Monday 22 August 7.30pm

**Power, Corruption and Lies**

Above the Walmer Castle pub, Peckham Road, London SE15 (buses 12, 36, 36a, 171, 45a)

Tuesday 13 September 7.30pm

**A World Still to Win - the Communist Manifesto of Marx and Engels**

Venue to be arranged - tel 071 837 1688

For details of FRFI Readers & Supporters Groups in Manchester, Birmingham and Dundee tel: 071 837 1688



## Asylum seekers rise up against injustice

**In May the mass hunger strike by asylum seekers came to an end. The issue of how Britain imprisons hundreds of refugees without trial had again been forced into the open. On 5 June, detainees at the Campsfield House immigration prison in Oxfordshire erupted in protest at the planned deportation of Ali Tamaret, an Algerian asylum seeker who had publicly criticised the denial of asylum to refugees held in detention. BILL HUGHES reports.**

Taking the Group 4 guards by surprise, the detainees wrecked furniture, kitchens and bathrooms. Video cameras, used to spy on the prisoners, were ripped from the walls. Several detainees staged a roof-top protest. It took 150 police officers in riot gear hours to control. Six asylum seekers made their escape during the protest, five of whom remain free.

When the Home Office Minister Charles Wardle visited to inspect the damage, detainees lay on the floor to prevent him from leaving. Twenty-two have since been moved to prisons as a crude reprisal for the protest. The remainder were locked in their rooms for two days, denied access to phone calls, prayers or television.

Ali Tamaret was deported to Algeria on 6 June. No news has yet been received by his friends here or his family in Algeria of his whereabouts or welfare.

Group 4 have meanwhile reinforced the fencing around Campsfield to prevent people from seeing inside and waving or shouting to the detainees. They have also banned former detainees from visiting, in an attempt to demoralise those who remain inside. None of this has prevented protesters



who are demanding the closure of Campsfield from establishing a permanent freedom camp and picket outside. This peaceful protest is now under threat. On 7 July the Home Office obtained a High Court order to remove the camp. The Campaign to Close Campsfield is fighting this attack on democratic rights and is continuing to hold demonstrations outside Campsfield on the last Saturday of each month.

The silence of Blair, Prescott and

Beckett over the imprisonment of asylum seekers was recently challenged by Bill MacKeith, President of Oxford & District Trades Council and active in the campaign, in a recent letter to *The Guardian*: 'How many immigration prison camps does the Labour Party plan to run when it is elected into government?'

You can contact the Campaign to Close Campsfield at c/o 111 Magdalen Road, Oxford or tel: 0865 724452/726804/727718.

### Free Kalunga Lemba

An asylum seeker who fled torture in Zaire only to be detained in Britain for more than 16 months has recently spent several weeks on hunger strike. Petitions calling for his release from COREZAG, NCRP, 170 Harold Road, London E13 0SE. Write to Charles Wardle MP, Parliamentary Secretary of State, The Home Office, 50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1H 3AT, demanding Lemba's immediate release and freedom to remain in Britain.

### Langdon Park 4:

## Asian youth under attack

**Four Bengali teenagers from Langdon Park School, Tower Hamlets, have been charged with Grievous Bodily Harm as a direct result of police collaboration by their own head teacher.**

Langdon Park is on the Teviot Estate which has the highest incidence of racist attacks in London. Assaults on Bengali pupils have grown in the last year, especially on their way to and from the school. In February Suhel Miah was slashed down the side of his face and neck. In March racists threw a CS canister at some Asian youth; when police arrived they abused the same Asian youth, calling them 'Pakis' and warning them 'not to blame the white kids'.

In the face of school authority indifference, it was clear that sooner or later the youth would defend themselves. On 11 May Lee Bourne, a leading racist thug in the school, got into a fight with some Asian youth, and suffered a minor cut. Now the authorities swung into action. Head teacher Chris Dunne brought in Bourne's sister to 'identify' Abdul Kobir from school photographs, and called the police into the school to arrest Kobir, without even informing his parents. Dunne then handed over the photos to the police and gave them addresses of other Asian pupils who had been similarly 'identified'. Dunne was seen in Limehouse Police Station on the evening of 13 June. Next morning the police raided and held 8 youth for up to 10 hours, three of whom were charged.

The court case is a frame up. None

of the defendants has been identified by Bourne himself. Its purpose is not justice but state intimidation to back up the fascist attacks. The Asian youth, backed by the local Bengali community, are organising protests: on 8 July students from St. Paul's Way, Kingsway College, Tower Hamlets College and Community Defence joined a rally of about 70 youth. When the 4 appeared in court on 18 July a community stayaway was observed by many Asian students and a small number of white students.

East London Teachers Association unanimously passed an emergency motion condemning Dunne. Nevertheless teachers at the school are divided, because Dunne has threatened a libel case against Community Defence for alleging that the head has ganged up with the police to harass Asian students. The legal department of Tower Hamlet's newly elected Labour Council is supporting this action.

Parents of the Langdon Park 4 have issued a statement of complaint addressed to the Chair of Governors and the council. What will the Labour council do? The very first thing should have been to suspend the head, but then pigs don't fly and the Labour Party doesn't fight racism.

Ian Bradshaw

**The Langdon Park 4 are innocent - drop the charges now!**

Picket 9.30am Monday 1 August  
Bow Road Magistrates Court,  
Information supplied by Community Defence

## Benefits workers act against racist laws

**The attempt by Hackney Council benefit workers to boycott new legislation concerning 'persons from abroad' has ended in defeat.**

The legislation was rushed through with minimal opposition or publicity and took effect from April. It forces councils to check the immigration status of housing benefit applicants and places the burden of proof on selected claimants. In practice, this means excluding mainly black potential claimants and forcing others to prove eligibility for benefit, while (mainly white) long-term British residents will be taken at their word.

Where, for example, it had been a disciplinary offence to ask to see a claimant's passport, now it becomes obligatory. Hackney's 'progressive' Labour council - notorious for banning black employees from speaking in their own languages - rushed to implement the new policy. Many housing benefit workers objected. Under the slogan 'We are not immigration officers', a large minority of the workers voted on 27 May to boycott the new procedures.

This action by the more militant workers was initially quite successful in terms of local publicity for a piece of racist legislation, and caused the council much well-merited embarrassment. But many workers failed to join the action, arguing that the legislation wasn't racist, or that the action couldn't win against central government. Top council managers threatened to send staff home without pay unless they signed letters agreeing to the new procedures. Around 50 per cent signed; on 29

June management started sending home staff who had refused to do so. About 50 workers then walked out in protest, but despite intensive picketing and publicity, few workers joined the strikers, and a mass meeting on 1 July voted to abandon the action. A resolution was passed, however, demanding no victimisation and no individual signatures on compliance letters, and this was accepted by management. But apart from the publicity, our objectives were not met. Widespread failure to support those union activists sent home for following union policy has left friction within the union and management preparing for further attacks on union organisation. The difficult question of tactics in such situations will need much further discussion ... and not just here in Hackney.

Eduard O'Faolain

### Justice for Winston Silcott

**As we go to press Superintendent Melvin and DI Dingle were let off after a trial at the Old Bailey charged with falsifying interview notes with Winston Silcott, leading to his conviction for the murder of PC Blake-lock.**

Just like the police in the Guildford 4 case, this trial turned into a retrial of Winston. No one is, apparently, responsible for gross acts of corruption and perjury. Winston is still in gaol serving life but has just won leave to judicially review of the decision not to refer the Smith case back to the Court of Appeal. We wish him success.

## FIGHTING RACISM IN BRIEFS

### Darnall Defence Campaign

The Darnall Defence Campaign in Sheffield is campaigning against police racism and harassment of the Darnall Asian community. On 4 May Asian youth defended their community against 20 white men armed with bars and baseball bats. When the police finally arrived, they merely put the racists in a van, and dropped them off round the corner. A few days later, the youth organised a demonstration against a local BNP meeting: the police descended in six riot vans, and arrested six young Asians and two white anti-fascist campaigners.

Following this, a 500-strong community meeting was held to demand an end to police harassment, the dropping of charges against the eight, and an independent inquiry into Attercliffe police station. The police and local media have responded by blaming 'violent Asian youth'. Meanwhile police harassment continues: at the beginning of July Defence Campaign chair, Nissar Jaffar, was physically assaulted and ejected from the police station by Inspector Reg Bateman, when he complained about the arrest of an Asian boy the previous day. However, the campaign continues, with pickets of both police station and court, forcing charges against five of the defendants to be dropped.

The three remaining defendants appear at Sheffield Magistrates' Court on 28 July. Support them by coming to court on 28 July and by sending donations to the Darnall Defence Campaign at 643 Stanforth Road, Sheffield S9 4RJ or tel: 0374 232361.

### Tower Hamlets 9

The six remaining Tower Hamlets 9 defendants appear on trial at Southwark Crown Court on 4 October, facing charges of Actual Bodily Harm; one of the juveniles is also charged with police assault, and one defendant with resisting arrest. All the arrests arose from a police attack on a peaceful demonstration last October against a savage racist attack on Bangladeshi student Qudus Ali. The Defence Campaign will be mobilising support throughout the summer for a picket of the court on 4 October. Contact: Tower Hamlets 9 Defence Campaign, PO Box 273, Forest Gate E7 or tel: 081 548 0099. Donations welcome - cheques payable to Tower Hamlets 9 Defence Campaign.

### Rotherham protests

In July seven young Asians were arrested after protests broke out following a racist attack on a black driver. 150 people gathered for a mass picket of Rotherham police station, although it was the early hours of the morning and so ensured that the defendants were released within 3 hours. Details: Darnall Defence Campaign.

### Defend the Rochdale Three

Three anti-fascists appear in court on 16 August on 'violent disorder' charges which carry a possible sentence of 5 years. Details: Rochdale Three Defence Campaign c/o PO Box 110, Liverpool L69 8DP.

### Rahman family - here to stay

The Rahman family from Bolton, originally from Djibouti, have their appeal hearing against deportation on 7 September. In 1991 Mrs Rahman was diagnosed as having cancer whilst on a visit from Djibouti. Her daughter, Shabana, is mentally handicapped and attends a special school. But the Home Office wants to deport the family. The Rahman Family Defence Campaign is organising a series of events under the slogan: 'Support the Rahman family! Solidarity, not pity!'

Public meeting: 6 September, 7.30pm Manchester Town Hall; All night vigil: 6 September, outside Appeal Court from 9.30pm; Mass picket: 7 September, 9-10am, outside Appeal Court, and lunchtime rally 1-2pm. Further details from: Rahman Family Defence Campaign, 16 Wood Street, Bolton BL1